

MARTIN SALANDER

By the same author in this series

GREEN HENRY

A VILLAGE ROMEO AND JULIET

MARTIN SALANDER

GOTTFRIED KELLER

Translated by Kenneth Halwas



JOHN CALDER • LONDON

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CHAPTER I

A WELL-DRESSED MAN not yet advanced in years, carrying an English leather travelling bag slung over his shoulder, walked out of the railway station in the Swiss city of Münsterburg. This traveller did not go into the town, but like one who is sure of where he is going started out upon the newly-laid streets towards a definite location in the outskirts. Despite his obvious knowledge of the surroundings he was soon compelled to stop a moment in order to orient himself. He noticed that the layout of the streets was no longer that which he had known and had travelled in earlier days; now, as he looked back towards the railway he observed that the building from which he had just emerged was not the one from which he had departed some years ago. The old station in fact no longer existed but in its place stood a much larger building.

This ornate and imposing stone structure, which could scarcely be taken in at a single glance, shone with quiet splendour in the afternoon sunshine, and the man looked at it like one entranced; then disturbed by the harsh noises of the traffic, he retreated. But with his head held high and with the travelling bag swinging gently from his hip, its motion almost induced by the thoughts going through his mind, he took satisfaction in each forward step at the thought of rejoining his wife and children where he had left them years ago. He searched fruitlessly however among the never-ceasing additions to the town, looking for traces of the old shady friendly paths which earlier had led upward between gently rolling meadows and gardens. Now these same paths lay buried under dusty or gravel-surfaced roads. Although this steadily increased his admiration he was still pleasantly surprised as he turned a corner and found his way unexpectedly blocked by a house which he immediately recognised by the old-fashioned rural style of architecture peculiar to this region. The jutting roofs, the red beams, the little front gardens were the same as they had always been.

'Why that's the Finch!' cried the wanderer as he stopped short and, with a warm feeling of home, observed the old building, 'truly the Finch! That's the place! I wonder why it is that in seven years I haven't thought of the place or even of the name; yet, when we were students we used to drink such fine apple cider here whenever we had a penny or two. And the old fountain is still here too, the one we used to tease the proprietor about, telling him that he watered his cider and milk from it.'

Indeed, the clear mountain water gushed out of the same ancient wooden pipe and into the same trough and even through the same sawn-off rifle barrel which was set into the pole in place of an iron waterpipe. These re-discoveries stirred up new enthusiasm in the man.

'All hail, venerable token of peaceful protective forces,' he said to himself, half aloud, 'this barrel that once spewed fire now dispenses pure waters for man and beast! But there already hangs in each house, I understand, a loaded rifle waiting to be put to test; long may the homeland be spared this ordeal!'

At this same instant a troop of playing children approached the fountain—little people ranging in age from two to six years. The six-year-olds could have been two brothers—twins even—as they both had the same round heads and full cheeks; covering their little pot-bellies were aprons cut from the same floral-patterned oilcloth, worn not only as protection for their clothing but also to set them apart from other children. Somewhat to one side of the group stood a solitary figure, a pale youngster who looked about eight summers old and who caused the attention of the returned man to be diverted from the old gun barrel.

In an arrogant manner one of the two boys wearing aprons hailed the lonely one:

'What are you doing here? What do you want?'

The youngster to whom these questions were directed did not answer but merely looked at his inquisitors with a melancholy expression on his face. The other twin, with his hands clasped behind his back and his apron-covered belly protruding, walked nearer and said insolently:

'And what are you waiting for here?'

'I'm waiting for my mother!' replied the boy in a faltering voice, wondering whether he had even the right to stand there. But, like an adult, the other said coolly and contemptuously:

'So, you've got a mother?' And his brother broke into a loud laugh and cried:

'Ha ha! He's got a mother! '*

Instantly the entire choir of children sang in mimicking laughter:

'He's got a mother! '

And never before had such happy carefree laughter been heard from such small persons. As if the most hilarious occurrence royally amused them, again and again from the depths of their naïve child-hearts they drew out fresh volleys of 'ha ha's.' They were grouped in a circle: inside was a small waddling boy of two, who with his fat hands held his sides in, repeating in his childish manner:

'Oh! He's got a muvver! '

Like everything else in this world this amusement gradually reached its end; the man with the travelling bag who had observed everything closely and of course could not understand any of it asked in a friendly manner:

'Why do you children laugh because this boy has a mother? Don't you have mothers too?'

'No, we say "Mama"! ' declared one of the ringleaders of the group; at the same time he picked up a piece of broken pottery from the ground and, dipping it into the basin, showered water upon the boy who had a 'mother.' The latter now lost his patience; he sprang forward in order to tussle a little with the mischief-making twin. Immediately, both brothers began to yell and cry: 'Mama! Mama! '

'Isidor! Julian! What's happening; what's wrong now?' a voice was heard to say, and out of one of the houses came a strapping woman, undoubtedly called away from the laundry tub. Her damp apron was thrown back, in one out-thrust fist she held a fashionable straw hat decorated with silk and flowers; with the other tanned arm she tried to wipe the sweat off her forehead, scolding the milliner who followed her because the hat had not turned out as expected. The flowers were not showy—she had wanted them to be as large and beautiful as those worn

* The usage of the nouns 'mother' and 'mama' vary according to social levels. The people comprising the middle and upper classes usually call the female parent 'mama'; those of the labouring classes refer to her as 'mother.'

by the other women—and then, too, white ribbons were to have been used in place of the brown ones. She did not know why she could not wear white ribbons just as well as the others. Although she was not a town official's wife, perhaps some day she would get one or two such specimens as daughters-in-law.

In the meantime the milliner had taken away the hat and had answered in a pert, only half-respectful manner that it was a good thing that ribbons were not already white as they certainly would have been spoiled now by the wet hands of the woman; besides, it was questionable whether the brown ones, now full of spots, could ever be restored to their former condition. She would see what the proprietor had to say about it. She replaced the hat in the box in which she had brought it, and, annoyed by the entire matter, prepared to return to the millinery shop. The wife called after her and told her to see to it that the hat was delivered by next Sunday as she wanted to wear it to church. Only then did she attend to her boys, Julian and Isidor, who had not stopped their screaming although the strange boy had retreated to his former position.

'What's the matter with you two? Who's bothering you?' she cried. In answer the boys screamed: 'That boy over there wants to hit us!'

But now the traveller, who until then had been intent only on being a silent observer of the scene, intervened and told the mother that her two children had first splashed the other with water and had teased him for having only a 'mother' and not a 'mama.'

'That's not nice of you!' said the mother in way of a reprimand. 'It's not his fault if he has poor or uneducated parents—and you can thank God that you're better off.'

The man with the travelling bag could not refrain from asking whether in this region it was an indication of poverty and neglect among the people to call one's parents 'father' and 'mother.' He placed the question with well-meaning curiosity in his voice, without scorn and with a willingness to discover something new and worthy of praise. But the woman looked at him wide-eyed, considered his statement for a moment and decided that it was actually an unexpected, uncalled-for attack; then she replied with a sharper edge to her voice:

'We're not "people" here, we're "gentlefolk" who always have

the right to get ahead, and all of us are equally genteel. My children call me "Mama" so that there's no need for them to be ashamed before people of the upper classes and so that they can walk through the world with their heads held high. It's every real mother's duty to see to this while there's still time.'

'What kind of noise is that you're making, anyway?' asked her husband as he approached. He placed a basket full of small carrots next to the fountain and added: 'Here are vegetables to wash. The boys can rinse off the dirt; I want to dig up the plot right away and re-sow it. Give them a tub so that they don't spoil the water in the trough; I want you to see to it that the water for the cattle is not always muddied by the boys!'

At this, and because of the presence of the stranger, the woman was really provoked. The boys were now all dressed up and they were not going to get dirty again! She would clean the carrots herself later; there was still enough time as they would not be called for until the next morning.

And now the twins called: 'Father, Mama says we can't get dirty! What shall we do now? May we run off and play?'

And without waiting for an answer, they ran away with the other children; the stranger, however, did not leave but remained standing, lost in reflections—especially over the new fact that the husband of the 'mama' was a simple 'father' to his children—and he certainly was not treated as respectfully by them as was their mother.

While he was still in these thoughts the farmer, or rather the vegetable gardener, interrupted him by asking: 'And what about this gentleman here, does he want something?'

'He'd better not want anything!' interjected the wife. 'He called us mere "people" and wondered why the boys should call me "Mama"!'

'That's not the way it was intended!' the stranger said smilingly. 'On the contrary. I'm pleased with the refinement of the habits in this part of the country and with the increasing equality among the citizens, but I notice that the head of the family is still called "father" and not "papa." How do you explain that?'

Annoyed, the woman gazed at her husband who on this subject may have vexed her considerably in the past, but this time she remained silent. The husband, in turn, now contemplated

the stranger with a sharp questioning glance as his wife had done earlier, and as he observed the honest, good-natured face of the stranger, he opened up and spoke in a rather confidential tone.

'Look, my friend! This is a matter about which a good deal might be said! Equality certainly does exist, and all of us here are striving to get ahead. Our wives are the most zealous about it; one after another assumes the title of "mama," while we men-folk in our daily work couldn't use the same decoration. We'd laugh ourselves silly at our own expense, at least for the present; and then, what is more important, our taxes would be raised if we were to take on the title of "papa"; at least so the pastor has given us to understand at the school board meeting where the problem was first brought to our attention when a school-master talked of "papa" and "mama" whenever he spoke of the parents of some of the pupils. Of course those were the children who had brought him fine presents. Since the vanity of women is well known, the pastor claimed that it didn't matter too much how the women were addressed; but if the men allowed themselves to be called "papa", they'd be admitting that they included themselves among the wealthy and refined, and since they paid too little in taxes anyway, people would soon figure out how their tax rates might be raised. All of the six teachers were immediately given strict orders to avoid the use of the word "papa" for the sake of equality and to say only "father" for both rich and poor.'

At the beginning of this speech the wife had run back angrily into the kitchen; the farmer now went on his way with considerable haste, remembering that he still had enough to do and already had gossiped too long. So the stranger was left standing alone in the quiet square. It was now that he first read the inscription on the old house: 'Vegetable Farm and Dairy of Jacob Weidelich.' So these people are the Weidelichs, he said to himself without being aware of it. He gently rubbed his forehead like one who does not rightly know where he is; then he remembered that it required, at the most, a ten minute walk in order to see his loved ones. And as he turned and was about to walk away, a hand fell on his shoulder and a voice asked:

'Martin Salander, is that you?'

It was he, indeed, and he turned like a flash at hearing his

name spoken for the first time on his native soil and now, too, saw for the first time a familiar face.

'And you are Möni Wighart!' he cried. They shook each other's hand, looking at each other searchingly but pleased as good old friends are who had never been obligated to one another in the past. A meeting like this at the threshold of every homeland is always a good sign.

The aforementioned Möni, or Solomon, as he was referred to, seemed to be ten years older than Martin Salander but appeared as fresh and neat as ever in his moustache and mutton-chop whiskers, and he carried the same walking stick with the gilded dog's-head knob as he had twenty years ago. He called all decent people 'thou,' although no one clearly remembered when this custom had first started. In spite of that he never had an enemy, and for all who met him he was a resting place and a pause in the worries and thoughts that moved them.

'Martin Salander! Who would have thought it! And how long have you been back in this country? Or have you just arrived?' he asked once again.

'I've just come from the railway station!' was the ready answer.

'Well, I never! I've just come from there myself; every day I have my coffee there and see whoever comes and goes, and I didn't notice you! The deuce! My, my, here is Martin Salander again! Is it true that you came here straight from America?'

'From Brazil—but I spent six weeks in Liverpool on business. But now it's time that I look up my wife; it's been half a year since I've heard of her or my three children, they must have been expecting me for a long time. I hope everything is all right with them.'

'Where are they? Here, up on the hill?' This question the old friend put with only half certainty in his voice; the other man also seemed to be somewhat disconcerted.

'Of course, for some years they've leased a small summer house up on the *Kreuzhalde*. It can't be too far from here.'

Martin thought to himself: There, he knows nothing about it, at least he pretends so; it only shows that he hasn't been there a single time—he the eternal stroller and beer drinker! It can't be such a splendid venture; and anyway, poor Marie doesn't have any first-rate wine to sell.

Wighart passed over the embarrassing moment by seizing the hand which Salander offered in order to say good-bye, and he held it fast.

'I'd come with you, but that wouldn't do at your first reunion; at such times a man has no need of any meddlers and lookers-on. Not more than ten steps away from here, around the corner, there's the Red Man where Hauser, the old justice of the peace, sells his last year's wine that tastes like nectar. On nice days I always drink a pint of it. You must come with me, Master Martin, and we'll empty a bottle together. I won't have it any other way. In half an hour—in twenty minutes—we'll be finished; and besides, the afternoon is still long! Come on! Don't argue about it. I want to be the first to have a drink with you, and I promise that I'll not detain you long.'

Martin Salander, whose hand the good old friend would not free, earnestly resisted, moved by his desire to see his wife and children who were now so near. Nevertheless, as one who has travelled widely, who many times has made great detours and purposeless delays and who can very easily add a quarter of an hour to the seven years of his absence in order to honour this unexpected meeting, he finally allowed himself to be persuaded. He knew without a doubt that his companion particularly wanted to be told, and told right away, some of the details of his experiences besides those of his arrival, and to be the first in the village to relate the story of Martin Salander. But Martin himself suddenly felt the need to hear news of his homeland from this always well informed man. Thus it was that instead of continuing on the road to the *Kreuzhalde*, he turned and went away with Möni Wighart in another direction, following the latter to the Red Man where a wealthy farmer resided on his ancestral holdings and as a side line sold his unadulterated home-grown wine.

The square around the fountain was now completely quiet and empty, except that in one corner there still stood the boy who waited for his mother—he was the youngest child of Salander, who had just departed.

CHAPTER 2

INDEED, the two men had not far to go before they came to the house which was hidden behind some fruit trees. As they entered they discovered that the host's living room, which also served as the taproom, was empty. A woman who had been busy in some other portion of the house approached them, having come in response to Wighart's knocks.

'Where's the justice of the peace?' he asked, and in the next breath he ordered a bottle of wine.

'They're all in the vineyards,' the maid answered, and from the cupboard she took a white flask which she dipped into the water held in a shining copper kettle. On the side of this container was embossed a scaly fish in the shape of a half-moon. On both sides of the kettle was the signature of an ancestor, and under each was a date from the 1700's. The girl went to fetch wine directly from the cellar, and while she was gone the guests sat down at the broad walnut table.

Martin Salander looked around, inhaled deeply, and said: 'How peaceful and quiet it is here ! For seven years I haven't sat down at a table like this!'

Through the windows he saw only greenery—apple trees and meadows—and instead of the blue sky between the branches and boughs as far as the eye could make its way, in the background was the rising vineyard whose earth had just recently been carefully loosened. Only here and there a head of the bending workers could be seen to rear up from the foliage, and one imagined that he saw that sunny distance into which those eyes gazed.

'Seven years, by God! Is it already that long that you've been away?' asked Wighart.

'—and three months.'

The girl brought the wine and several slices of rye bread, and, as the guests did not want anything else, she returned to her work. Wighart filled both glasses.

‘Well, welcome!’ Möni toasted, touching Martin’s glass with his own, thus once more honouring the returned traveller who was not yet completely home and who, before the time came for the reunion with his family, was enjoying the peaceful familiar surroundings. ‘*Prosit!* You certainly look fit, really the picture of health. I take it that things have come your way and you’ve prospered.’

‘Everything imaginable has happened to me; I’ve defended myself and rambled about; I fought and I slept very little—that I can assure you—finally I recovered from the blow that had fallen upon me. It took longer than I had imagined to become a success.’

‘If I’m not mistaken, didn’t you get into difficulties because of an affair that involved some bond money? At the time I was away on a trip, and when I returned people said that you were gone.’

‘Of course, that affair with Louis Wohlwend!’

‘That’s it! Everybody took an interest in your misfortune, but they wondered how you could think of risking your property in such a rash transaction.’

‘I didn’t risk anything on a gamble, I had no intentions of getting any profit but simply to do what was expected of me as a friend; and, besides, at the time I didn’t believe that the question of payment would arise but rather was of the opinion, as much as I still remember, that “the soup was not eaten as hot as it was cooked.” Every true deed of friendship is bound with a certain amount of risk—otherwise it would not be called a friendship. When we were at school, studying to become teachers, we were already fast friends. He learned only with difficulty and for that reason he looked to me for help—to me for whom studies were easy, yet to the others it seemed as if I were learning from him. God knows how that happened! Still I thought it amusing as he was a droll fellow, trusting and clever, and whenever he saw two people conversing he always butted in—even when they were teachers or professors. He knew how to behave pleasantly with them, especially during the exam period. By no means did he attempt to worm out of them the information on which they would base their questions, but he knew how to suggest to them what they should ask him; then he would have me pour (call it whatever you like) the subjects in question into his head. It was

as if, with a few little words, he had a talent for stringing the thoughts of men, to weave them to and fro, and to unravel them; yet, continually, he was not able to keep his own thoughts in order. But, as I said before, everything was amusing, and we all let this go on. Sure enough—he obtained a job as an assistant in a country elementary school where things went smoothly and he was contented; but when he took over high school classes, that is, as a teacher of older children, he soon began to slide from job to job and shortly afterwards gave up the teaching profession. In the meantime I continued preparing to become a secondary school teacher—and I worked hard too; I also worked at the school to which I was appointed, working not only with my customary enthusiasm but also with some sense of duty, really taking pains to see that I developed my students as thoroughly as possible. I looked forward to the days to come when I might meet with many a farmer who would thank me whenever he had made a correct calculation, whenever he was able to survey a field, whenever he was able to read his paper with greater understanding and, perhaps, whenever he read a French book—and all without taking his hand away from the plough. Of course, I didn't live to see that day; the students disappeared from before my eyes and hid themselves in all kinds of offices. Not one of them did I ever again see out in the fields and in the sun!'

Salander paused and reflected, then gave a soft sigh and continued speaking:

'But did I do any better? Didn't I run away from the plough myself?'

'You mean when you gave up teaching?' asked Wighart, as the other had again become silent for a short time. 'How did you happen to do that?'

'At home both father and mother died in the same week of a deadly fever. A sick young calf of theirs had died in its stall, and they buried it in a meadow beyond the house—not far from our good spring; and so, quite unintentionally, they poisoned the water. The hired man and the servant girl barely escaped death. The cause for the deaths was not discovered until later. But in me fear and grief soon changed into a great restlessness when I saw myself in possession of the family fortune; and then, after the sale of the farm, things turned out rather well for a school-master. I married the woman who is now my wife and who long

ago had caught my eye, and she too possessed some money. It suddenly became too confining for me in the peaceful schoolroom of that remote district; I moved here to the city, over there behind the trees. I wanted to stand in the middle of the traffic, to be among adults, to look out for freedom and progress, to be a business man, to be a model employer, yes, even to do my duty and enter the military service and become a man, although I was past the usual age for conscription. I had a guilty feeling because I had some money, although it actually wasn't enough to be called wealth.

'First, I became a partner in a modest spinning mill which was managed by an able man; on the side I took over an ownerless strawgoods business—this you already know—and it didn't do at all badly. I put all my heart and mind into the business, but I still left some time for pleasure, and there was Louis Wohlwend. As you know, he managed a commission house in addition to various agencies, and he was still that same engaging and intimate companion—a busy-body you might say. Everyone got the impression that everything went well for him and he knew exactly what he wanted from life. He was a close companion to me, as close as his time would allow, and I soon had the reputation of being his special friend. I didn't object to that although much about the man was strange to me. He introduced me into a singing club, and there I noticed that he always sang off-key, but I thought that he couldn't do anything about it. Later in the evening, as we drank some wine, he would be all the more amusing and popular. He was known as the nuisance in the second tenor section, but yet he held his own. Finally this really annoyed me, but he acted as if he had no inkling of it. At last I told myself that that was a kind of idealism whenever a poor devil like Wohlwend, who has no ear for music, wants to sing so badly.

'One evening during Christmas week, as I worked at closing my account books with every intention of staying until after midnight, he came to take me away to his club where there was to be a Christmas party and grand entertainment. I didn't want to go along, but as he didn't yield and because my wife also asked me to go—she said that the relaxation would be good for me—I went. That was my unlucky day.

'In my enthusiasm I bought a gift on the way to be placed under the Christmas tree. It was an educational book with gold

edges, and in the raffle I received a smoked Westphalian ham for it. When the dinner was over and the continuous round of comic singers, declaimers and parodists had begun, Louis Wohlwend climbed to the podium and announced that he would recite Schiller's ballad, "The Pledge." He began immediately. To my amazement he knew the poem by heart and he put it over with some amount of excitement or conviction, but because of his devilishly false stresses the result was more unpleasant than ridiculous. Unconsciously he spoke in the tone of uneducated people who, when they read aloud, read in a wailing or in a shrill voice and pound the table; because of their emotional state, they distort their speech by stretching the words asunder, and, as if out of madness, they shout the unstressed syllables because the main stresses aren't enough for them. Even the closing of the first stanza he rendered in ascending notes, in this manner:

The town from the *tyrant* to *free*!
The cross thy reward then shall *be*!

Then he closed the second stanza:

I'll leave thee my friend as my bail
Thou canst kill him instead, if *I* fail.

As he continued, it became dreadful:

'The monarch then smiled with a malice-fraught sneer.

And with that, a smile and an expression truly filled with evil intentions tried to mix themselves in his face. In contrast the end of the poem sounded cheerful:

And let my entreaty be heard
To form in your friendship *the* third! *

* Friedrich Schiller, *Poems*. (London: George Bell and Sons, 1884), p. 157. Because it is almost impossible to recreate in translation the effects desired by Keller, the German text is also inserted.

Die Stadt vom Tyrannen *befreien*!
Das sollst du am Kreuze *bereuen*!
Ich lasse den Freund dir als Bürgen,
Ihn magst du, entrinn' *ich*, erwürgen.
Da lächelt der König mit arger List,
Ich sei, gewährt mir die Bitte
In eurem Bunde *der* dritte.

This was seven years ago and his foolish tricks are still as clear in my mind as if they had occurred last night.

'I was put out of sorts somewhat when Wohlwend climbed down from his perch and again sat next to me. Since it was close to midnight I got to my feet in order to look for my hat and coat, and I went away, but I was scarcely out on the street when he overtook me. He cleared his throat as if he wanted to recite a new piece. I interrupted him by asking whether he actually found any satisfaction in chanting a poem, or any speech for that matter, so poorly and reciting so excitedly and, at the same time, in such an erroneous manner.

'“Yes” he answered with a still trembling voice; he was excited and, of course, he couldn't have spoken calmly as it was he who was seeking the bail and who was at a critical turning point in his affairs.

'Then with a completely changed and an entirely rational voice he made his business known to me immediately. He had attempted an undertaking of great consequence and it had demanded a considerable pool of capital, but his bank credit had been completely exhausted by the running of his business and it would be for some time to come. On no account did he dare back down without prejudicing his possessions and honour, to proceed would only multiply them; in short, it was a question of opening up a new source of credit by means of a bond which could be done by having three signatures. Within fifteen minutes, at Wohlwend's house, I signed the first signature on a previously prepared document making me jointly responsible and liable as a pledger. Then I immediately returned home to sleep. The other two co-signers I've never seen; they were a pair of decent, retiring men—“dead-beats”—who quietly moved away before the catastrophe, but not without having ruined several of their own creditors.

'Well then, before a year had expired Louis Wohlwend declared himself bankrupt, and what had to be fully and immediately paid for at the beginning of the bankruptcy proceedings was the sum total of the security I had provided. It devoured what I and my wife possessed, and at the same time my own business was liquidated, quickly and cleanly—thanks to the good order that prevailed in it—and I could go wherever I wished! I was finished for this once! Then would have been the time for me

to return to the schoolroom, but oh, that was the farthest thought in my mind! Wohlwend, however, lived for years and years on that bankruptcy which they said had disappeared like water in sand; how he managed, I don't know!'

'But how could you surrender your wife's fortune?' Wighart interrupted him. 'It was hers by right, and she could legally have kept it.'

'My wife didn't want that,' Salander said, 'because of the children's future, for I would have been bankrupt. We were young and believed in our future and we didn't want to ruin that!'

'But why didn't you take the family along or send for them later when things were going smoothly?'

'Because I want to live and die in the Fatherland, I'm no emigrant! Then too, I couldn't have turned and fought as I was forced to do; twice I had a fever and had to pay enough for my experience and then had to begin all over again. When I went overseas I took some cases of straw hats along which someone had entrusted to me, and with them I also received some light silks and cottons; these furnished me with enough stock to make a scanty beginning until a young fellow whom I had taken in disappeared, taking all my worldly goods while I lay helpless in a fever. Circumstances forced me to enter the service of a larger concern, and then I travelled through the Brazilian provinces buying and selling. In time I learned the domestic trade that I followed to my advantage later. Now I'm through and I've regained my loss—more I don't want—and I can start working again in my native country and among my family. "Here I have Moses and the Prophets"!''

He slapped his well-made travelling bag and, suddenly remembering called out:

'Just look, this is a wonderful homecoming! Six weeks in Liverpool and now I'm five minutes away from my wife and I'm still here! Finish drinking the wine yourself, my friend; I know you'd like to stay here a while longer! This green, shady corner is really inviting!' The old friend, on the other hand, pointed to his pocket and stopped him.

'I suppose you have good securities with you?' said Wighart. 'In case you want to give up one or more good issues of stock, I wouldn't mind if you'd let me buy them now; you know, in

these "paper-wise" times there's always something to take care of or to improve.'

'Nothing of the kind' said Salander. 'I used to have all my earnings deposited in the Atlantic Shore Bank in Rio de Janeiro. It's a strong, expanding, young business; and now I have on my person a bill of exchange worth just less than three dozen *Contos de Reis*.* It's payable ten days after sight.'

Pleased, he once more slapped his pocket.

'By Jove, a luscious note!' said Wighart.

'The bank here has been advised two months ago, or longer, as I recall,' replied the other.

'With which banking house? Certainly in the "Big Trunk?" Or in the "Old Chest?" Or in the "New Chest?" These are the newest nicknames for our banks.'

'Xavier Schadenmüller and Company it's called; wait. I've got it in my note book!'

He pulled the little book out of the side pocket of his coat.

'Yes, Schadenmüller, Xavier & Co.'

Wighart looked at him with eyes as big as saucers until he found the proper word.

'Did you say Schadenmüller? Do you know who that is?'

'Probably a wide-awake firm if seven years ago it hadn't been known of at all!'

'Unlucky man! It's Louis Wohlwend and no other!'

Martin Salander, now quite pale and faint, slowly got up from the table but immediately sat down again and said:

'It seems that everybody has a Nemesis who stands everywhere and stares him in the face. When you expect him the least, there he is! What a situation! But anyway, who says that he won't pay? He must have advanced and worked his way upwards; how, I don't care! My Atlantic Shore Bank is not made of straw and it knows what it's doing. If that fellow has been restored to his former powers Fate will give me back my first fortune.'

'Once more I say, unlucky man! The man called Schadenmüller has been gone for two years, his successor, Wohlwend's partner, six months; from the present sole representative of the firm, Wohlwend, it's said that since yesterday he's once more

* Approximately £5,000 at the exchange rate current at the turn of the century.

stopped payments and protests are pouring in. The business office is closed!'

Salander jumped to his feet and tugged at his travelling bag. He pulled himself together quickly and sighed: 'The poor woman! I was happy because I had enough money set aside to repay her for her dowry—I even had added interest to it and had planned to invest it in securities as soon as I got home. Now for the second time Wohlwend has it. That rascal who always sings off-key and recites even worse!'

The man brushed away a few bitter tears from his eyes. Wighart, exceptionally moved by sympathy and anger, stood next to him and persuaded him not to lose any time.

'Before you do anything else you must go into the city, find Wohlwend's office and convince yourself as to how matters stand. It's on Winkelried Street.'

'Where's that? Seven years ago there wasn't any street by that name.'

'It's a sedate, quiet side street in the West End; there aren't any shops in it, but on the doors are polished metal plates and right there you'll find Schadenmüller and Company. I'd go with you, but perhaps it would be better if you went alone; in the meantime I'll inform your wife of your arrival and prepare her for it.'

Salander grasped his arm. 'No,' he shouted, 'don't go there! I have to do that myself. Since I've returned to Europe I haven't written to her because I always wanted to surprise her and I didn't think I'd be delayed so long in England where I still had to arrange some things and to prepare for the future. I couldn't bear to have my poor wife learn the news from a stranger. It would be easier for her after she saw me again!'

'As you like! Then I'll come with you and show you to a notary if it's necessary, as I believe it is, for the next step will be to initiate a protest. Finally, you have recourse to your Oceanic Bank or however it's called. The notary's office isn't located in the same place as it was seven years ago. I wonder how those people in Rio could have had such important business connections with Wohlwend.'

Wighart called the maid, paid the small bill, and the two men hastened down towards that beautiful portion of the town in which Winkelried Street was situated.

CHAPTER 3

ALL THIS TIME the boy had waited for his mother in front of the Finch, repeatedly walking a short distance in the direction in which he expected her to come. Afraid of missing her, however, he always returned to his post because the shortest way to the city from the *Kreuzhalde* really did not lead that way. This explained why the people in the Finch were not acquainted with the little family.

Mrs. Salander had taken this route for the first time, because on the other street lived the baker who cancelled her credit the first time he failed to get paid and who even went so far as to send one of her small daughters home empty-handed when she was sent for bread. Mrs. Salander felt insulted by this and for a long time afterwards she barely managed, though somehow she contrived to exist, living in hourly expectation of her husband. Suddenly Want, like the Grim Messenger, arrived.

All of a sudden this silent visitor was within, so that same day, early in the morning, she was able to give her children only some milk; as for herself, she had not even that. And today she was expecting some of her few remaining customers who came occasionally on pleasant evenings to drink their coffee in the open air. For weeks she had not seen any other guests and therefore she no longer had money. Rather than ponder over these things for a long time, she concentrated on trying to discover some means of seeing her children through the day. And that other affair—the arrival of her husband—was also in her mind.

She did not hurry, as she would have if she were going to sell or pawn her personal possessions, but walked leisurely to a small bakery shop in the city from which she previously had purchased rolls and the like and to whom she owed nothing. She obtained the bread and rolls she wanted without any trouble. From the grocer she received a small bag of roasted coffee and the sugar to go with it. From another shop she secured a piece of good ham and a half pound of fresh butter. Everywhere she was well received because she was a quiet, retiring woman who otherwise

never asked for credit. Only the baker in her neighbourhood no longer gave her credit because he lived on the way to her house and was aware that almost no one went up there anymore. Wisely he considered that the end was not far off.

In spite of the willing offers of the people of the city, she did not take half an ounce more than she immediately needed although she could easily have obtained provisions for a few more days.

Thus Mrs. Salander came—slender rather than broad, simply and cleanly dressed, without flowers on her hat, passing over the square before the Finch with a basket on her arm.

‘What a long time you had to wait, Arnold!’ she called out to the boy who eagerly sprang out of the corner of the shed where he had finally sat down on a low wall. ‘I have the supplies even though I couldn’t pay for them. Now we ought to hurry home so that we’ll be ready if people are really coming! Thank God that today I won’t have to say that the cupboard’s bare!’

‘But if they eat everything up,’ said the boy, ‘then do we have to keep on being hungry?’

‘Why, they never eat up everything, at the most they take only half of the food, and we’ll have to satisfy ourselves with what is left over until tomorrow when I’ll have some money! If they don’t come, however, then we’ll drink the coffee and eat as much as we want—and tomorrow is another day!’

Soon they reached the *Kreuzhalde* which lay higher up and from where they could see the city and the open countryside. Immediately, Arnold’s two sisters, Setti and Netti, came to relieve their mother of the basket. One girl was ten, the other nine and, like their brother, both had that delicate pallor which appears in healthy children when they are unwillingly beset with troubles which are not clear to them. Still the eyes of the girls shone more impatiently and eagerly than those of the boy who seemed to be of a more tranquil disposition.

Mrs. Salander preceded the children into the house and they followed, filled with the greatest curiosity. She quickly took off her hat, wrapped a clean white apron around her, and unpacked the basket. She piled the bread and rolls on a large plate, put the butter on a smaller one, sliced the ham and spread it out on a dish so that it looked as though there were plenty. All this she did without being tempted to put even a single piece into her

mouth so that she would not set a bad example to her poor children who sat around the table and rested their elbows on it, looking on.

'Have courage, children,' she said with a fairly cheerful smile, 'have courage and be patient! Everything will turn out all right when your father comes back. For a little while longer we'll have to look on while others eat; still we want to see, just for fun, if we can't do something in spite of everything. Are you really finished with the homework you were given for over the holidays? Haven't you any more arithmetic to do, no copying exercises or something to memorise? Take out your books! I almost believe that the sayings and verses will stay in your minds longer than before because of this remarkable day of hunger.'

The girls did not want to hear anything about learning: Setti, precociously, called the empty feeling in her body a stomach spasm; Netti was afraid of getting a headache and both would rather crochet, if they were allowed to, as each had started a purse for their father. Only Arnold bravely trusted in this fib of his mother's and said he would take advantage of the opportunity and make a stab at the difficult hymn he was supposed to learn for the next catechism class. The song contained four stanzas of ten lines each, which were so long that the page was not wide enough for them and their ends had to be bent around like a noose for catching small field birds. The mother approved everything, then hurried into the kitchen to get the milk ready which she had divided that morning and had locked up in case anything happened. She took a pot of honey from the cupboard which, unfortunately, contained only too much of that sweet because there had been so little trade. She filled a beautiful crystal bowl with the honey, and at the same time it occurred to her that a spoonful of the thick, nourishing syrup might charitably cover, for a short time, the children's young sorrows. No sooner said than done, she went from one child to the other with the bowl, ordering them to open their mouths.

Weary, she finally let herself sink down on a chair and, with a sigh, surveyed the strange arrangement by which she wanted to combat the dark, reigning fate or at least to keep it in check. Not only did fate accompany enemy armies, earthquakes, storms and plagues but also in the most insignificant occurrence in the quiet life of a household it rushes on—breaking in without warn-

ing, bringing destruction and dishonour. If her present precautions went amiss or in the end still brought about shame, could she then recapture the illusion that she was the hostess of a well-provided inn? The ship carrying her husband and his accumulated wealth must have sailed weeks ago, but what if it had sunk? On thinking of that she forgot herself and her fate, desperately searching for the dark mental picture of her long-missing husband. Engulfed in her thoughts, as if she were on the bottom of a sea, she started up as voices were heard outside. The garden bell resounded, and the children ran to the window and announced that the professor's family was there.

In the courtyard, or former garden-plot of the inn, all that remained standing of a now-vanished grove was a single plane-tree which shaded a last table with its outstretched branches. A family consisting of a white-haired man and his wife with their daughters who were no longer young had just taken their places at the table. But just then the children at the window called out: 'O heavens, there's still somebody else coming, a tall stranger who will certainly eat up the ham.'

And, indeed, there was a tall, unwanted guest stalking upwards as Mrs. Salander arrived and greeted the assembled company.

'How are things going with you, Mrs. Salander?' the old man welcomed her. 'You see, we remain loyal to you as long as a tree still stands here. Bring us our usual coffee, the butter smooth as ivory and the liquid amber! The latter is for the women!'

'By the amber, Papa means the fine honey which you served to us the last time!' the wife of the professor advised the hostess who had heard this explanation just as often as the expression, but because of absent-mindedness had forgotten to smile this time.

'Then as for us men,' continued the Herr Professor, 'we'll drink a bottle of that sweetly-cleared red wine of '65. It's mellowed nicely—no "Goethe" in quality but certainly a "Schiller"—and it prickles so pleasantly as it enters the theatre of the human tongue in order to perform its play. With it we'll have some slices of smoked beef tongue just to keep busy. That is, if you still have one as tender as the one you had last time.'

'Unfortunately, we don't have any tongue,' said the woman blushing slightly, 'but I can offer you some ham instead'

‘That will do, bring us some ham!’

She hurried into the house to have coffee and milk put on the fire, assigning this duty to the girls while she neatly set the table with a white table-cloth as if to give the impression that the house were flourishing.

Soon the food stood invitingly on the table and only the wine was lacking. In the cellar Mrs. Salander still kept the last two bottles of the wine, the only drink she had left except for a half dozen bottles of beer which, for all she knew, might no longer be drinkable. Originally she had set aside the wine for her long-awaited husband. With a sigh she took one of the bottles and served it, worried that they might order a second and even a third which would reveal her poverty. She carried the steaming coffee outside and did not forget to fetch a bottle of pure, cool water from the well.

Soon, however, trouble drew her into the house in order to keep back the children who were coming out of the door. She ordered them to remain in the room for she feared that the poor things would surround the guests and look on with greedy eyes and reveal their hunger to the talkative gentleman as well as to the critical curiosity of the women. Still she could not prevent the children from peering out the window; their glances never left the table, the table of the hearty, food-loving people. They saw how the ladies cut their rolls and spread them with butter, how they put them to their mouths and then repeated the procedure, all the while maintaining a steady conversation. With more pleasure they noticed how the old gentleman soon pushed back his plate in order to rummage through his pockets for his cigar case. But they saw with horror how the tall stranger with the wide maw and goatee ravenously attacked his food and, with machine-like rapidity, made ham sandwiches. He arranged them on his plate in a circle and stuffed them into his mouth whole, one after another. The children shuddered, and the mother did not feel any better either when, because of the weird stranger, the wine bottle very soon stood empty, and the professor called for a second one.

A new disaster loomed in the form of a band of children who, with ripped-off branches and switches, came wandering uproariously over the courtyard, stopping presently and staring at the table at which the small company was seated. At the head of

the troop stood the twins, Isidor and Julian, hands behind their backs, their small apron-covered bellies protruding. They were attentively observing the table, and their glances remained fastened on the ham rolls and travelled with them down into the yawning abyss of the wide-mouthed one until he was finished with his meal. With his fork the professor stabbed a small slice from the serving in the dish and held it before Isidor's nose, saying: 'Open your mouth and close your eyes!' The boy obeyed without delay and snapped up the small morsel and a piece of bread which the professor immediately had stuck into his mouth. The same thing happened to little Julian; and thus it went, first to the one and then to the other, until the last remains of the ham had disappeared. With the remaining youngsters the two daughters did the same—only they stuffed buttered bread into the children's mouths and amused themselves with the odd faces the youngsters made. Within a short time all the plates were empty and nothing edible could be seen on the table.

Mrs. Salander stood behind her children at the window and saw how here, too, the course of the world ran—one part of the people devoured what was destined for the other. Suddenly it grew dark, caused, no doubt, by a raincloud which had approached unnoticed. Scattered drops already slapped against the window panes, and in the leaves of the plane-tree an unfriendly breeze rustled. The company hurriedly got up from the table. The old man rapped on the table with his cane and, as Marie approached, demanded their bill immediately. Before she could answer he cried: 'Now on top of all I must have forgotten my purse or maybe even have lost it!' Searching in all his pockets to no avail, he turned to the tall guest, saying: 'Sir! Help us out of our distress! Are you perhaps "armed with spears or lances"?'

The tall stranger was already so completely wrapped up in the many layers of his yellowish-plaid robe that it was with the greatest of pains that he tried to reach his small purse. As far as the old man was concerned that took too much time.

'Never mind,' he cried, 'we'll have to run if we still want to reach the nearest carriage stand; I'll pay you the next time, my dear you know us!'

'Please, Professor, it doesn't matter, just so you get home safely and dry!' Mrs. Marie Salander said composedly. But her

steps were somewhat uncertain as she accompanied the people, who no longer looked around, to the end of the property.

Turning back, she was just in time to see the twins cleaning out the sugar bowl and then hurrying off with their companions. The honey had also been spooned out of the pot.

Previously, she had locked in her own children and had pocketed the key, so without their help she gathered up the dishes and put them on the large coffee tray, neatly folded the tablecloth, placed it under her arm and with some clatter carried the tray into the house; then she went to the children who stood in a little group.

When they saw their mother, overcome by grief and today for the first time not knowing what to do sink down into an easy chair, they repressed their childish claims for care and protection out of consideration for her. Her soft sobs were drowned by the rushing of a fairly heavy rain shower which now descended and darkened the air. And thus it became quiet in the twilight-darkened chamber. Frau Marie made use of that instant to gather her courage and wits. She decided to hold out to the bitter end; for this time they would prefer going to bed hungry rather than endanger the reputation of the returning husband.

Heaven itself appeared to come to her aid, for it became lighter around her; the sinking sun again commanded the field and drove the rain-cloud up the slope to the edge of the forest where it remained hanging like a dark grey curtain. One end of the rainbow shone very clearly on it as if it were standing on a freshly-bedewed, sparkling, green meadow. It was of strong shimmering colours, such as are seen only rarely in a lifetime and then always remembered. Since the rainbow glowed rather nearby, one saw to the left and the right a few slender birch or ash trees silhouetted, their crowns bending into the gaily-coloured splendour.

Without pondering on it the mother immediately realised that the beautiful play of colours would divert the minds of the children perhaps until darkness had crept upon them and would once again bring welcome sleep. She wanted to fortify the children at once by a portrayal of a glorious banquet and completely fill their imaginations with it because she had heard it said at one time that whenever hungry people dream of delicious,

sweet things in their sleep the night passes tolerably well, and she herself even hoped to feast a little with them.

'Look, what a beautiful rainbow!' she cried, and with that awakened the children from their brooding. They looked upwards and, in wonder, gazed at the splendour with wide open eyes which were no longer filled with tears.

'They have a better time of it over there than we do here, if the fairytale is true!' she said.

'Who? Who?' asked the children.

'Why, the little people in the mountains! Haven't you heard anything about them yet? The little men of the earth and their wives, who become so old that on their little backs they carry a small immortality, relatively speaking, naturally, because they are no bigger than the middle finger. It's said that they live to be a thousand years old. Whenever they notice that their race is dying out in one place then the last one hundred little people, dressed in their holiday clothes, gather together and hold their farewell banquet under a rainbow, or rather on the first floor of it which is a real magic hall. Look, you can see from here how the inside of it must glitter! Then too, they are supposed to celebrate their departure for another reason: whenever the big people in the land begin to degenerate and become stupid and evil, and when the sensible little people down below foresee a troublesome end, they decide to emigrate in order to avoid that fate. Inside many rainbows they then make merry for one more time. Be that as it may, I don't know what this occasion is, probably it's a matter of a dying out; and then, if that's it, there will be at the most a hundred little men and their women gathered. In their rocky rooms in the depths of the forest and along the hidden sources of the brook, they bake, roast and brew all day long, and then send the food and drink ahead. Now they have arrived, each with his little golden dish hanging from his back in a small silk bag with four tiny tassels. For us these would be no larger than a penny but for a little dwarf they're full-size dishes. Long tables of roof shingles are covered with the finest of cloths. There they parade around in a solemn procession. At the head march ten fully armoured knights in boiled red crabs' noses for breast plates, with the remainder of the shell serving as armour for the arms and legs; for helmets they have ornately twisted snail shells on their heads. They carry the old silver and gold tankards and

other treasures of their tribe. As the earth people go around their table, each one pulls his dish out of the small bag, lays it at his place and sits down behind it. Then they all earnestly shake their neighbour's hands. And now follows such an enjoyable feast that the gold plates, the fine knives and forks just jingle! First comes the most delicious stewed rice and raisins, along with little sausages which are made of skylarks and tender suckling pigs. These sausages are magnificently roasted. Every two or three men share the bowl before them, which is a gorgeous ripened peach from which the stone has been removed and refilled with muscatel wine. You can imagine how they dig in with their little spoons!'

Thus she continued to paint the banquet of the gnomes, not aiming so much at plausibility but at its appeal to children. When she could not describe any more she drew the story to a close, especially since the rainbow had faded and the last glow of evening had yielded to dusk.

'They have eaten now and drunk enough and talked about their young days, their middle years and their old experiences; all of a sudden they rise in unison, shake hands once more, this time in confusion, and in a small voice say: "I hope you have enjoyed your dinner!"'

'Suddenly they look for the hole where they had entered and begin to crowd out, stepping on each other's heels and pushing one another in the back until all have disappeared; and the table in the dining-room, with everything remaining on it, is deserted. A solitary unmarried little woman who, at the very youngest, is two hundred years old, and who, if one of our kind, might be about twenty years of age, still remains. She has the responsibility of washing all the dishes and cutlery, drying and locking them in an iron trunk which she buries in the ground at the place where the rainbow stood. The ten knights, who in the meantime have still remained behind "sleeping off" their peach bowls, help her with this. And like farmers who throw in a little piece of red brick to show where they intend to place the boundary marker, so they also throw in the little crab's shells and then too go away to lie down and sleep. What about the last little woman? She puts on her back the little sack containing her own gold dish, takes a staff in her hand and, a solitary soul, wanders into the distance in order to bring to other people of

her kind the remembrance of their dead race. It is said that such persons marry into a younger tribe in a strange land.'

At this point Marie Salander became silent, somewhat amazed at the storytelling which she had presented to the children while they remained quiet, enthralled by the fairytale which like the rainbow had vanished into thin air. They scarcely were able to see the last maiden, with her staff and little dish, moving along through the grass and furrows.

The mother arose seized by a sudden idea. She rushed to her small dresser, pulled out a drawer and from it took a box which contained some gold jewellery. The modest hoard was a bridal gift from her husband and was held inviolate, but it was not that for which she searched. Under other little things lay a roll of paper which she seized and now opened. Her glistening, golden rainbow dish, an ancient pierced coin called a bracteate, was brought to light. In former days such antiquities were preserved jealously in old established families and, as a special kindness, perhaps, used only as a god-father's christening gift. The piece which Marie Salander now held in her hand had been put in her swaddling band at her christening, and she was reminded of its possession unexpectedly. On the hollowed surface was stamped an imperfect man's head and near the picture, in scattered characters, was the inscription *Heinricus rex*. Written on the paper in Salander's handwriting was the notice that the gold was worth ten francs; the selling price, however, might be ten times as much or even more.

She wondered why she had not thought of this last resort earlier. It almost seemed to her as if she were the little earth or mountain woman who had travelled to strange lands and had acquired a little troop of children and now was obliged to sell the inherited gold dish in order to obtain food.

'Now it's all right!' she told them, 'Just this short night of fasting or sleeping; early tomorrow morning we're going to go to the city, sell the old penny and eat as if it were a fair.'*

The children looked at her doubtfully. They imagined her words to be the continuation of the fairytale whose credibility seemed to decrease as their hunger awakened again.

Then the doorbell rang. It was Martin Salander who, after

* *Kirchweih*, originally to commemorate the completion of the new church.

scurrying around taking care of business matters, had gone to the railway station to get his suitcase and trunk, and with the help of two men had brought the luggage home, not wishing to appear to come home to his family empty-handed—a strange but pardonable self-deception.

But before the woman had struck a light, he stood in the open doorway and, into the half-darkness in which he recognised only indistinct forms, spoke with a quivering, soft voice: 'Good evening!'

Recognising his voice the woman raised her arms and, partially paralysed by fright, walked towards him approaching slowly and, throwing her arms around his neck, it was not long before she cried with joy.

'Oh, my dear husband!' she exclaimed in half-stifled words. 'Have you come? Are you really here?'

'Yes, my Marie! And even before I can see you I can sense that you are my devoted, dear better half, every inch my wife!' he said before holding her fast in his arms and stroking her shoulders, arms and nice full cheeks.

She closed his mouth with kisses and without releasing him called: 'Children, light the lamps so your father can see you.'

The two girls did this, and as it became light they stood in a row with their brother. At the time of the separation the girls had been two and three years of age and thus had a hazy mental picture of their father, but with the help of natural friendliness of childhood they recognised him. Trustingly and curiously they gazed at him. In comparison, the boy, Arnold, had been only one year old and could not recognise his father no matter how much his mother had described him. That was why he cast his eyes downward and bashfully bent his head, stealing a look out of the corners of his eyes at the strange man who now strode towards him. He lifted up Arnold's chin and then those of his little daughters before he took them all in his arms and smothered them with kisses, looking at them again and again.

'You good wife,' he whispered, once more embracing her, 'what dear, handsome children you've raised for me! And how happy I am that I'm still able to help you a little bit.'

'They're really good children!' she answered in his ear, full of confidence. Afterward when she saw him in the light, while he became acquainted with the children, she saw how tanned he

had become by the tropical sun, also noticing that he did not seem to be any older than he was seven years ago, and that nothing foreign or strange clung to him.

The men who had brought the luggage knocked on the door, wanting to be paid. Mrs. Salander pointed out the place for the things; her husband gave the men their money and sent them away. Changing the train of his thoughts, yet still in a good, almost wanton mood, he called:

‘But now, Madame Hostess! What do you have to eat and drink for your husband? I’m hungry as a wolf and I haven’t had much food since this morning!’

‘None of us have had anything at all to eat, and it certainly isn’t the first time!’ his wife answered with a smile which was meant to sweeten the bitterness. ‘Just before you came we were completely without food; but don’t worry, we haven’t run into debt for anything but a month’s bread and milk!’

With staring eyes he again measured his wife and children, one after the other, speechless, yet inwardly sighing: This is getting better and better! Finally he cried:

‘But for heaven’s sake, Marie, why did you write to me at one time and tell me not to send any more money because you could manage?’

‘Because at first I could,’ she replied, ‘and because I wanted you to keep all your earnings together so that you could really do something with the money.’

‘That can’t help us now; we have to eat, especially the children and you! Now then, you don’t have anything to eat in the house?’

‘Not a morsel!’

‘Then we’ll go to the city immediately, find a good inn and order our supper. You poor things! Hurry, put on whatever you’ll need! Do the children have jackets and caps?’

The three had already flown from the room and soon returned with their Sunday jackets, little collars and caps. The mother put on her best hat, drew a shawl around her and put on her gloves.

‘Well, today is turning out better than we thought!’ she said happily to the little ones whom she had hoped to feed. Then she seized the arm of her husband, sending the children on ahead of them. But when he saw all the dirty dishes from that afternoon piled up in the hall, he remained motionless for a moment saying:

‘There must have been some feasting here or why would you have these dirty dishes?’

‘Yes, there has been some, but we only looked on! Come, I’ll tell you tomorrow what kind of a hostess I’ve been!’

So they went out of the house; the mother locked the door and gaily went down the mountain road forgetting how feeble she had felt a short time ago. Happy, the wife leaned on the arm of her husband of whose own troubles she had no presentiment. Meanwhile he steered towards a region where he hoped to be undisturbed with his little brood; but when they came to a large, well-lighted garden in which many people sat and music was being played, the children wanted to go in there and quiet their hunger amidst the strains of music produced by violins and flutes. They stood and looked in yearningly through the fence where people were dining.

‘They’re right!’ said the father to his wife. ‘Why shouldn’t they have music today? Stay here with them a minute, I want to see if I can’t find a corner for us where we can be alone!’

He went into the house, and on the ground floor of the building found some people sitting in a dining-room, the windows of which were open, but a small adjoining room was empty although a round table was laid for dining. He immediately brought his wife and children inside and had them sit down at the table over which hung a gas lamp.

How happy the children looked as they laid their hands, one over the other, on the tablecloth, now and then drumming with their fingers.

Martin Salander shook his wife’s hand, then he reached over the table to shake his children’s, one after the other. He did not say anything and he was happy to forget everything else. A waiter came, asking for their orders.

‘Marie, order what you want and what’s good for the children. With your permission I’ll change it if you’re too thrifty!’ Salander said.

‘Do you have any warm soup?’ she asked the waiter.

‘Oh yes, on concert evenings suppers are served.’

‘Very well,’ Salander said, ‘then we don’t have to worry. Isn’t that so, Marie?’

‘I’m quite satisfied!’ she answered, happy not to have to order.

The waiter quickly placed the plates and the silver. Soon he reappeared with the soup tureens and a soup which gave off a savoury aroma.

'Just set it on the table!' said Salander, 'and don't hurry with the other courses; we want to have time to enjoy it. We'll make it worth your while!'

'As you wish,' replied the waiter leaving the little party alone, with their soup. When Salander saw that his wife was leaning back comfortably in her chair and then wanted to sit forward quickly in order to fill the plates, he restrained her and himself served the soup which smelled like ambrosia. And as she took up the spoon in her hand, the orchestra in the garden outside began to play so lively a tune that the children moved by the sounds of the trombones and rolling kettle drums, raised the first spoonful to their mouths with a strange mixture of ravenous hunger and lightness of heart. After the first outburst of noise a pianissimo soon followed, which the audience outside listened to in silence; those inside, however, continued eating, inattentive to the music. Someone outside whispered 'sh'; Marie became startled at this, the children laughed and Martin Salander shut the window.

'Eat, and don't worry about it!' he admonished. So it was done, and a short time later the children, their appetites fully satisfied, enjoyed the dessert. Each had received a glass of wine. Their mother, however, had drunk three. To the father it now seemed as if he were sitting in Paradise as the flowering faces, slightly blushing, shone towards him with happy eyes as if they wanted to say what happiness really was—a kind of magic plant, the 'Everlasting.'

In any case, in his thoughts he said: This what I see is the truth and not that which I know!

The children became more and more merry; Arnold had snuggled up at his father's side and suddenly said: 'But Father, don't you know that I have seen you earlier today, there at the well where the Weidelich boys made fun of me because I only had a "mother" and not a "mama"?''

Because of what had happened later Salander had completely forgotten the incident and the appearance of the boy. He now took his son's face in his hands and shouted:

'By God, it's true! Where are my wits? Had I only known

that one of my blood was so near!' Marie looked up, amazed.

'Then you were already in the neighbourhood this afternoon and didn't come here?' she asked, almost pained at the thought. He now realised that his unhappy situation was real and so had to compose himself since he could not announce their new misfortune at this time and place. He was one of those men who would rather be silent about these things, as if he himself had committed the crime and not somebody else.

'I admit,' he said, 'that since about two o'clock I've been on the way up to see you! At the Finch I met an old acquaintance, Möni Wighart. He dragged me with him to the Red Man and there the thought occurred to us that we ought to get my baggage from the station so that that would be settled; next I had to take care of the duty on it and the officials made some trouble for me; then on the way I exchanged the English money I had, and other things came up. In short—you know how it is—time slipped past and before I knew it, it was evening. But don't think it unkind of me—it happened of its own accord, just like the whole course of the world.'

For some time she had been satisfied with his explanations and inwardly was happy that the course of events had so coincided that her husband had not come when she had so peculiarly served her guests and that the guests had not become unwelcome witnesses to his home-coming.

Not until nearly eleven o'clock did they set out on their return to the *Kreuzhalde*. Since the time of their arrival the moon had risen, and in its clear light they went on their way, the children leading. To the father's gratification the children began to sing—rather well, too. His wife did not let go of his arm; she asked questions, told him news and chattered away, generally surrendering herself to the enjoyment of a friendly turn of fate.

The closer they approached the house the heavier became Martin's heart again, for the moment neared when he must tear the poor woman from her heaven.

No, not tonight! he said to himself, tonight she'll have a good sleep in happiness and bliss—she's earned that many times over. Tomorrow is another day!

The house lay quietly before them in the moonlight. They unlocked the door and the children again ran ahead and lit some lights, making the room look more cheerful than it had been for

a long time. The mother saw her little rainbow dish in the paper lying on the floor. Unnoticed by the others, she picked it up and busied herself at the little dresser in order to put it back and keep it. In her happiness it did her good to attach a small superstition to the charming possession and adventure so that in future days it might again announce or foretell bliss.

'Now get ready for bed, children. Early tomorrow you have to go out and get some things for your breakfast as well as for your father's. Later I'll go out myself.'

She pushed the excited children into the bedroom where she used to sleep with them. Their father came along in order to see where they slept and also to pull the covers over their noses. It did not look as it usually does where people live who do not have a bite to eat, because everything was in a good, clean state—even more so in the next room where for months the woman had kept her husband's bed ready for his return.

'If you hadn't come today,' she said jokingly, 'tomorrow I would have made a beginning with your bed and sold it as surplus. You realise that!'

'Fine! If you had only done that earlier instead of doing such devilish work which led to starvation. But I wanted to ask you a couple of times before,' he continued, pointing out the window to the moonlit neighbourhood, 'what's become of the many fine trees which used to stand around the house? Did the owner have them cut down to be sold? The fool! They were an asset to the business.'

'Someone had taken the land away from him, or rather forced him to make building sites of it since several other landowners had had an unnecessary street laid. There it is, every shady green has disappeared and the ground changed into a sand and gravel surface. But no one comes to buy the lots! And since the trees are gone so is my business.'

'They're really rascals if they spoil things for themselves. Now we ought to get some rest too. Marie!'

'What, Martin?'

'I'll bet you that you've certainly forgotten!'

'What?'

'My old boot jack.'

'Here it is!'

She pulled it out from the foot end of the bed.

CHAPTER 4

AFTER EXPERIENCING all this emotional tension and excitement of the past day, Salander could not resist falling asleep. But his heavy sorrows which were by no means lessened, awakened with the first ascending rays of the sun. He saw his wife who lay sleeping in deepest bliss; every line of her face in its serenity and contentment was like the proclaiming herald of a secure soul. And this peace he should utterly destroy with a few words—the hour was irrevocably here.

His latest misfortune now seemed real to him, and he bitterly regretted that yesterday he had not run away at once or had gone right into the house and told his family the bad news.

When he, led by his good old friend, had located Schadenmüller and Company he noticed that on the house, on a shining gold background, was painted a picture of Arnold von Winkelried* with the gathered spears in his arms; next to it was the inscription: 'Provide for my wife and children!' That house was owned by Mr. Louis Wohlwend who had that picture painted, but, as was shown later, for which he had never paid.

After thanking him, Salander sent away his escort, Wighart, because he would rather appear alone before his old, and now presumably new, debtor. He climbed the stairs and on the second floor again saw the words 'Schadenmüller and Company' on a shield; alongside was a name card on which was printed 'Louis Wohlwend.' He pulled on the bell and someone wearing worn slippers was heard shuffling along to answer it. When the door

* The name of Arnold von Winkelried is second only to that of Wilhelm Tell in the hearts of the Swiss people. During the battle of Sempach when the Swiss were attempting to break the ranks of the Austrian knights, Arnold, after entrusting to his comrades the cares of his wife and children, rushed towards the enemy, gathering a number of spears together against his breast, fell pierced through and through. Thus he opened a way for his compatriots to pour through the enemy line and subsequently overwhelm them.

opened a shabby, boyish-looking young man stood before him, glue brush in hand, asking whom he wanted to see.

'Is the owner of the business in?' Salander asked in reply.

'The business is closed at this time, Mr. Wohlwend is here, I think; whom should I announce if he's available?' the young man answered suspiciously.

'Just lead me in to him wherever he is, he'll recognise me all right.' Salander said somewhat brusquely as he turned the young man around and pushed him on ahead.

The man led Martin into an empty office and asked him to wait outside while he went into the private office of Mr. Wohlwend. While waiting, Salander looked around and saw that someone was kept busy here—copies of a poorly duplicated circular were ready to be folded, put in envelopes and the latter sealed with glue. Some minutes passed before the young man came back looking for him and asked him to go into Wohlwend's office. Salander knocked twice before someone called from within. As he entered he saw a man dressed in a large, flowery dressing-gown sitting behind a broad mahogany writing desk. The man had his back turned to him and appeared to be busily writing. He did not look up.

'Mr. Wohlwend?' said Salander in order to make himself noticed.

'At your service,' the other replied presently but he continued to write. Then he looked up for a moment, suddenly whirled in his chair and shot a piercing glance at the stranger such as one gives to a deadly enemy. Just as quickly he took hold of himself, rose, took a step forward and pretended as if he were only now gradually beginning to recognise his visitor.

'Am I seeing things? Aren't you Martin Salander?' Martin, too, had to look at the man in the robe a little while in order to recognise him; although in his appearance there was almost no change except that he had deteriorated somewhat, and on his formerly smooth face he had grown a moustache which did not feel quite at home as it stabbed and struggled on all sides with its sparse hair. To the person for whom the moustache was new, the face, through this singular object, appeared suddenly frightfully empty, inhospitable and desperate.

'Certainly, it's me!' said Salander.

'Good gracious! Welcome!' said the other as he stretched out

his hand and blinkingly examined the unwelcome newcomer rather more like a suspicious creditor than like an evil debtor. 'It's a long time since we've last seen each other! And what good star has brought you here?'

'This!' declared Martin abruptly, insulted by Wohlwend's absurd manner. He pulled the bill of exchange out of his pocket and held it out to him.

Wohlwend took it with two fingers as one would a crab, raised his eyebrows and read the paper.

'Uh!' he said, 'the Atlantic Shore Bank in Rio. Yes, we do business together.'

'Weren't you notified of this?'

'Oh, I remember something about it but I didn't pay any attention to whom it referred. Our businesses have, unfortunately, expanded so very much that at the moment I haven't the complete picture before me. The bank has a considerable balance due to us; but we have mutual accounts and I'd have to look it up. Zounds! One hundred and sixty thousand francs. That was some business you had, my friend!'

'It's just about all that I collected in seven years. But I wish that you'd look it up.'

'I can't do that just now, Martin. You must realise that we're in an unforeseen crisis which we hope has passed over.'

'Who is "we"?'

'Why, the firm and I, the proprietor! There used to be a Schadenmüller here. But to make a long story short, the books are in the government office, and so you understand why I can't look it up now.'

'Then at least sign the paper so that I can prove that you saw it.'

'I'll write nothing until I know all!'

This attitude provoked Salander somewhat and he had to get a hold of himself.

'This is the second time that you're indebted to me, and you apparently don't think anything of taking all my belongings away from me this time either!' he said with a more severe glance. However, Wohlwend did not let himself become disconcerted.

'Please, don't scold!' he said in a rising voice. 'I'm not bankrupt yet! I never have been. And if I were I'd stand under the protection of the law and of justice. My house is still my castle!'

Astonished and exhausted, Salander dropped into an arm-chair covered with plush, the pattern of which consisted of roses as large as human heads. Wohlwend continued his speech in a soothing voice:

'Dear old friend! Do as I do; hold your head up high. Look, in my enforced leisure I'm not idle! Don't brood over the inevitable. I bury myself in science and art. Here I follow the hobby of heraldry, including rural house-markings, guild insignia and other similar fields.' A few well-thumbed books of coats of arms, as the signet makers' and spoon engravers keep open before them at the fairs and trade expositions, lay on the table. Next to it was a paint box, such as is used by little boys when they paint in their picture books, and several sheets of paper with quite childishly copied coats of arms—besides an assorted pile of papers covered with imitation medieval letters.

'Here old threads of political and cultural development can be laid open and new ones can be tied in the sense of the new distribution of the honour of the people. . . .'

Martin Salander did not listen to the rest of the man's speeches: mechanically he reached towards a filthy book that was lying open on its belly in the middle of the table of the merchant and the patron of the arts. It was an ancient blood and thunder novel and it had the mark of a rental library on it—evidently the only proper reading matter of the jester in his involuntary leisure.

He took his Brazilian bill of exchange out of his good, old friend's hand and pocketed it carefully, interrupting the speech and asking: 'Are you married, Louis Wohlwend?'

'How come you ask me that? No!' the latter answered.

'I only thought that because of that beautiful saying of Winkelried's which is painted on your house you might be. Are you really a protector of widows and orphans or of those who might become so unfortunate?'

'You know that I've always been addicted to idealistic impulses; it seemed noble of me to decorate the manor houses of bold *Burghers* with laudable maxims of historical or moral contents, and so give to the citizens some inspiration.'

After this piece by Wohlwend, Salander placed his hat on his head and without another word he left the house. He hailed a hackney-carriage and rode to the city notary's office. The

notary read the bill of exchange which Salander laid before him after having first told him the circumstances. Then the notary pushed his glasses up on his forehead and said:

'Are you Mr. Martin Salander? Yes? This is a serious matter. Tomorrow the official notice of the bankruptcy will appear with the usual set terms. You have time until then. I'll personally go to the man today and officially question him regarding your claim.'

'The most urgent matter, it seems to me,' Salander interjected, 'is that the protest go to the bank in Rio via the most speedy way. I'm ready to pay for a cablegram.'

'I'm sorry to say that that is not the next step for you, Mr. Salander,' the notary answered with deep sympathy. 'The day before yesterday an authentic report arrived stating that the Atlantic Shore Bank in Rio de Janeiro is no longer solvent; yesterday a supplement to that report came stating that the directors have disappeared and the employees have run away. For two weeks now businesses in this country have been receiving bad reports, and the worst one concerns the exploded bank and regarding everything connected with it as a widespread robber business. I'm afraid that many fortunes entrusted to the bank have been lost.'

Salander had to grasp the desk of the busy man but did not say anything.

The notary looked at the clock.

'I'll go to the court president with you, there is just enough time. In any case it is necessary that you get a legal confiscation for the balance due you from the bank, which supposedly, the bill of exchange should cover.'

'I've a carriage waiting down below,' said Salander. They rode to that aforementioned place and there received the desired judgement which really was not worth very much.

Such was the sad report which awaited Marie Salander upon her awakening. And when in the cloudless sky the early growing redness of dawn shone on her slumbering face, it seemed to enliven it like a very happy dream; her husband again postponed the judgment of his indiscretions—of which he now accused himself—until the children were sent out to buy food, then again until breakfast would have been eaten. He did not want his wife to stand in tears at the stove on the first morning of their new union.

CHAPTER 5

THE CHILDREN ran through the house while the mother prepared breakfast and later, with restrained joy, she ate with her loved ones around her. The children were so merry that they even cheered up their father, and although it had struck seven o'clock from all the clock towers, his sorrow took another little morning nap. Then he remembered the gifts he had bought in England in a generous mood. Immediately he opened the trunks and tossed out fitted leather cases containing steel instruments, remarkably beautiful picture books (whose English text he wanted to use for the first playful language lessons), fine fabrics and laces for his wife and daughters and sweets that were stuffed all over the box as filling.

All this provided both a glorious pastime and a confirmation of the beginning of a golden age, but it also spurred the mother on to fulfil the duties befitting such a change in fortune. She went to get dressed to do her shopping—which reminded Martin that his unlucky affair must certainly be known in the city by now; not only had friend Wighart undoubtedly taken his evening stroll through several coffee houses and, in all sympathy, announced the news, but the officials, too, had no reason in an open bankruptcy to make a secret of the extraordinary events. He could not take the chance that his wife might be taken unawares on the streets by the rumour. Hastily he gave one of the books and a handful of the English biscuits to the children and advised them to play in the open air under the plane-tree. This suggestion, of course, appealed to them.

'I like our father, don't you, Netti?' the precocious little Setti said to her sister as they left, Netti, imitating her sister answered profoundly: 'Oh, he suits me perfectly! And I think that he'll do for Mother. Don't you think so?'

Arnold, who followed, heard these shrewd opinions and understood more of them than his clever sisters thought because he considered it a kind of mysterious good luck that his parents

were so well-suited for each other. He trusted in it willingly but said not even a little word about it.

In the meantime the father had entered the bedroom where Frau Marie had just put on her dress and had begun to button the bodice.

'Marie,' he said, 'you never wrote that Louis Wohlwend had started a business again and, what's more, that it's a bank.'

The wife paused and stared at him:

'I don't know and never did know anything about it! How should I find out about that since I don't mix with people here in my retreat?'

'Haven't you heard of Schadenmüller and Company either?' he questioned further, still rather hesitatingly.

'No, certainly not! Who's that again?'

'That's the company I depend upon for collecting my, or I should say, our entire savings which I deposited in Rio. Wait!'

A strange instinct drove him to the open trunk where he took out the ledger which had been balanced in Rio, hoping that its presence would make his explanation easier.

On the last page containing an entry, in clear numbers, over a line perfectly and cheerfully placed by a stroke of the pen and with the aid of a ruler, stood the sum-total of his riches; and under it, for all to read, was this: from the above balance the sum of twenty-five thousand francs in Swiss currency is deducted for money due to my lawful wife, Maria N. N., from her dowry given to me.

He laid the opened book on the small table which stood nearby and pointed to the balance of the account.

'See, there are thirty-six *Contos de Reis*, a little more than a hundred thousand francs in our money. As you can see here, I set aside your dowry in the event of my death. Of all that I saved, three-quarters went to a respected banking house in Rio, and I have a bill of exchange for it drawn on Schadenmüller and Company where I should collect my money. But who is Schadenmüller and Company? A single, solitary individual named Louis Wohlwend who pays nothing, for he is again bankrupt, and to-day the bankruptcy notice is published in the *Amtsanzeiger*.* The report has come, too, that the bank, or rather that business,

* *Amtsanzeiger*: the official publication of the municipality.

in Rio de Janeiro has also gone up the chimney! Up to now no one can say where the money is, whether it was already done away with in Rio or whether Wohlwend has grabbed it.'

This he told in a dry, sometimes faltering voice. Although at first only half curiously, Marie soon saw in the book and in his face what was to her the most important thing and what had attracted her attention the most. Becoming quite pale and without saying anything, with shaking hands she finally finished closing her bodice but not until then did she begin to stammer out detached questions. Thus, little by little, she found her way into the details of the disaster. Patiently and almost humbly Martin followed her in the confusion of her speech, repeating the same disclosures and confirmations until everything was clear and intelligible to her.

Only then she broke into hot tears, wrung her hands and cried: 'Oh, you poor man! What do we have to show for our seven years of separation and of sorrow?'

Suddenly the cries changed into a vehement fit of anger.

'He's destroyed the last years of our youth, the dog! Where did he go with it, the leech! Can't someone sprinkle some salt on his tail? Can't someone squeeze out that sponge who soaks everything up? That accursed public pest! Wait, Martin! If you can't master him, then I'll raise our son so that someday he'll give him his reward. Now I know why I always had a horrible foreboding whenever I saw that marten with his sleek skin. Is it possible that just a short time ago I was as happy and healthy as a lark and now am so miserable, so sick, yes, so sick!' Desperately she walked around the bedroom. She opened the window and gazed outside.

'What a beautiful day!' she cried, 'what delightful summer air is spoiled for us! Well, that's how it goes, goes, goes!' So she added in a sing-song voice, sobbing out the bitter sorrow. She closed the window and sat down on the floor in a corner, putting her head on her arms.

In all his misery Martin Salander was amazed at the power of this passion which he had never seen in his wife before: led by the gentle hand of compassion he succeeded in rising above the mood of his wife and at the same time over his feeling of guilt. He stood in front of her.

'My dear Marie,' he said with tender seriousness, 'don't be so broken-hearted. It's only money! Should that be the one and only thing to which we ought to aspire, the only thing which we can gain or lose? Don't we have each other and also the children? And should this consolation suddenly become a commonplace as soon as it involves us and not others? Here, don't cower on the ground like a child; all the money and Wohlwend put together are not worth such deep grief! I see that you're quite overwrought; but despite your complaining about the lost years you're still young enough, and that seems to me as dear as the wonderful summer air outside. Nevertheless, stand up, dry your tears and don't let the children notice anything and in that way you'll be able to compose yourself. You evidently didn't hear that I had saved part of our money; I'm carrying good securities with me which aren't connected with Wohlwend at all and I stand here still far better off than I was seven years ago, to say nothing of being richer by practical experience and skills. Come on, get dressed; we'll go on our errands—I to the government offices and you for the house, and in the afternoon we'll take a long walk with the children. If we only act calmly you'll see that we'll again find a way out of our difficulty.'

He reached out his hand to her and she arose. It was, indeed, almost with the bashfulness of a child that she glanced up at him, and a flicker of encouragement and trust passed over her face. She saw her husband equal to the situation and capable of admonishing and encouraging her; in addition, his humility which caused her the most concern was, in an appropriate manner, discreetly put into the background. In a half hour they were ready to stroll down to the city together. Setti had to go along with her mother and the other children were exiled to their school books indoors. When Salander looked around the deserted, gravel-surfaced grounds, he noted angrily how in the distance a large orchard of fruit trees, which in earlier times had shaded the road, had also disappeared. The wooden sign which hung over the house door, displaying the inscription: 'Room and Board and Open-Air Restaurant,' caught his eye.

'Wait,' he said, 'the sign must go—and right now, too!'

With the help of a chair he lifted the board out of the hooks and set it behind the door.

‘Now you’re rescued from this dismal inn,’ he said, ‘we’ll let it be known immediately that it’s closed.’

The escape from her strange, forced situation, which demanded that she wait for guests who did not come and before whom she would no longer know how to act even if they did come, lightened her heart—as did the money which she again carried in sufficient quantities in her pocket—and restored her walk to its former steadiness. In spite of her serenity her face would not lose its seriousness because her soul only now was beginning to waver under the impact of the changing experiences which had rushed upon her only twenty-four hours ago, and she could not see the end of them. But this quiet vacillation only strengthened her determination to keep up her courage and to remain true to her family.

The husband and wife soon broke off the discussion until later in the afternoon. Martin Salander left for the notary’s office as the official announcement was just then appearing in the newspapers. Wohlwend flatly rejected the notary’s request to sign Salander’s bill of exchange and in this manner ignored his robbed friend as he had ignored him in the mailing of an insignificant circular to his other business acquaintances.

Still before noon, Martin, on the notary’s advice, looked up a lawyer who was respected by everyone, and he put his future in his hands. The lawyer, in turn, told him to bring in certified copies of his account books and correspondence which showed his dealings with the bank in Rio de Janeiro. In any case, a tedious unravelling of the entire proceedings was in prospect. The lawyer said that as things stood it would be best if it amounted to a downright swindle where one could discover the hidden loot by means of a criminal investigation, since in an ordinary bankruptcy the money is usually lost. Martin Salander had, in the meantime, set his mind at ease and at his leisure contemplated what he ought to do. Accordingly, he found himself calmed and, to some extent, satisfied by the lunch which his wife had prepared cheaply, but which was still tasty and nourishing. There was no more wine; she said he could decide for himself what should be bought and that for today they would have to be satisfied with fresh water. If they wanted to take a little walk Martin could take them to the inn, even if only to the Red Man, where there would be something to drink.

She cast this hint good-naturedly and with a little smile, for she would not have done so without the recent disclosure. Martin understood her completely and promptly answered that she was entirely correct in reminding him; he would try to get a little barrel of a wine which certainly should suit her taste. Once more the wife was contented by this escape from a logical discussion, for in it she saw the confession of his error in going to an inn with a stranger when he was standing almost at the threshold of his own door. For amends, she declared that she longed to walk for an hour or so in the countryside; she had never been in the forest above them since she herself had not had the time even when she had servants working for her.

Together they set out for the forest whose translucent shadows received them. The air coming from the grove of young trees, which he had not enjoyed for so long a time, made Salander feel fine; the schoolmaster of old awoke within him, and he began to tell his wife and children of the difference between the jungles of the West where only struggle and destruction rules and of the refreshing air which blows through the forests of the Old World where the trees are grown and nursed as if they were in a garden behind a house. By drawing their attention to the raked grounds and to the trimmed and well-kept trunks which had been cleared of underbrush and which were in a forest owned by a wood-cooperative or state, and over there, brambles, weeds and sickly-looking wood, the property of negligent peasants, he explained how the differences came about. He also tested the children on whether they could name a blossoming plant or could recognise a bird which had just sung. However, they knew neither one so he said to his wife: 'That's it, the children are too lonesome!'

'But my dear,' she replied, 'during the entire year the children are among a hundred others; in their schoolroom all the walls are full of pictures, and they also know the names of many birds! As far as living birds are concerned, as a young girl I, through my ignorance, experienced something that still haunts me today. On Sunday nights after a singing lesson, I walked home all alone over some high ground and sat down awhile up there. Opposite me lay another wooded hill and hidden among its trees was a bird whose song I didn't recognise. It was singing beautifully, so beautifully through the quiet air and solitude that it really moved my heart and tears came to my eyes. I mentioned it at

home and gladly would I have known what kind of bird that might have been. People made random guesses; a boy who could imitate many birds whistled various notes and then named the respective bird, but none of the melodies resembled that which I had heard. Now after so many years, in a quiet moment, I can still hear that invisible singer and I am happy that he has remained unknown to me, for in this way the solemnity of that evening hour remains fast in my memory.'

'You've already told me about that,' Salander said smilingly, 'and it's pleasant enough—I won't criticise it! Although if it should ever come to an argument against learning to recognise the birds, then I'll have to call you to order, Mrs Jesuit! Herald of the mysterious and the unknown!'

'Go on, you know that it isn't intended that way, you school-master!'

This teasing tone changed into a more serious conversation over the goals and limits of the business of educating the children, which his brave wife had valiantly undertaken and had successfully concluded. When they saw the children running in front of them both husband and wife forgot about the present and with revived hopes looked forward to the future which seemed to them almost as wonderful as the unknown bird had done to Marie.

They had gone a considerable distance and had descended into a little wooded glen through which flowed a beautiful clear brook whose abundant waters danced over the many-coloured boulders and rocks which had fallen from the mountain above. Straight out of a grove of young beech trees, it cascaded as a little waterfall over several moss-covered boulders into a pool; and Martin immediately recognised the pleasant nook from his visit of long ago.

'Let's sit down there for a little while,' he said and called the children to him to show them the way. Marie also praised the beauty of the glen and hurried down the steep rock-strewn path. For a long time she had not been able to wander the countryside except when she had had a purpose other than just walking. Having arrived on the banks of the brook they had yet to go around a large projecting rock which sheltered the best shady resting place. The children who had run on ahead suddenly stood still, and their parents also stopped where they were. They saw a man with turned-up trouser legs and rolled-up shirt sleeves

wading in the water, lifting up stones and searching for crabs. On a dry stone on the bank, next to a pail such as the fishermen carry, lay a few small dead trout and an open botanical collecting box which held food wrapped up in paper. In a sheltered spot in the cool water stood an open bottle of wine. 'The place is already taken,' said Salander half-aloud, 'we'll have to go farther.' He started forward to pass between the fisherman and the things he had spread out on the rock; his family followed in his footsteps, his wife next in line. Just then the man in the brook straightened up and looked round about him. It was Mr. Louis Wohlwend who appeared to be enjoying himself quietly.

The surprise held both parties so motionless that around Wohlwend's legs the waves of the stream were broken into foam, and behind Salander his family crowded together. As is usually the case, the one wronged was more embarrassed than the other; and since Wohlwend saw the Salander clan standing disconcertedly before him, he raised himself to his full height, brought his hand up to his hat brim and cried: 'Ah, *salut!*'

'Do you hold audiences out here?' Salander finally asked without moving.

'As you like!' answered Wohlwend. 'Where else should I flee these days but to the breast of Mother Nature? It is, so to speak, my day of honour on which I begin the martyrdom of our century as the victim of traffic—the struggle for existence! Today I'm listed in the official gazette, and the first consequences of it is that until the flood of gossip has ceased I must do without my modest place in the coffee house, my harmless little games over a cup of coffee. Etiquette demands that! From earlier times you know, my friend, that I believed in noble idealism; that is of benefit to me now and allows me to search for idyllic, consoling objects such as are offered here! Ha, the charming wife! My dear, I greet you with all respect after such a long time——'

'Wohlwend, you can't talk about trifles here with us. These are our children and it's not the proper thing to do in front of them; they shouldn't hear about them! Please, Martin dear, let's go on our way!'

Mrs. Salander said this as she laid her hand on her husband's arm. Martin dutifully turned around and silently continued on his way. Marie stepped to one side and pushed the children on ahead, and not until the last one was past did she proceed, and

then without looking back. She had to gather her skirts around her in order to pass between the scattered possessions of Wohlwend which included his socks and boots.

Wohlwend stood in his stream as if he were petrified. In spite of her pale calm such a sharp contempt showed in her face and voice that a fear arose within him that there might be still higher forces than judges of bankruptcies and meetings of creditors. It did not seem safe in the water anymore, so he waded out and quickly pulled his socks and boots on again in order to make himself more presentable in case anything else might arise. Then he put three or four crabs together which he had just caught and which had escaped from the little fish buckets and were straining towards the water. Finally, in order to recover from the ridiculous situation, he pulled the bottle of wine from the water and sat down on the rock next to the botanical collecting box.

But he repeatedly interrupted his evening meal. How dare that woman address him like a knave or rag picker, calling him 'Wohlwend' instead of 'Mr. Wohlwend'! He was most concerned over the children. Had he said something indecent which they were not supposed to hear? Not at all! Rather, he had spoken beautiful, elevating words even if they were not understood literally. If Salander had insulted him then he would have explained the legal situation to them; prudently, however, he had remained silent.

Because of the woman, Wohlwend's idyll was decidedly interrupted, so he gathered his possessions and took a course other than that followed by the Salanders.

The family again climbed upwards and for several minutes said nothing until Martin had to laugh about the short speech his wife had made.

'You treated him severely!' he said to her. 'How the devil did you think of addressing him as if he were a servant?'

'I think one speaks to the criminals in the penitentiary in such a manner, and in my eyes he's nothing better than that!'

Because of the incident she seemed to have been cheered a little; Martin at times laughed again when he thought of how Wohlwend cunningly had eluded the coffee houses only to find his master deep in the forest. After a pause, during which his wife was able to join him at his side, he again continued.

‘I don’t know, I wonder now and then if he isn’t a fool rather than a criminal. A dangerous fool, to be sure!’

Marie answered him with only a soft sigh, cutting off any further conjectures; The children roved right and left in the wood; the parents, however, walked silently side by side for a long time. Finally, Martin observed a path which went higher up. ‘Here’s a path which, if I’m not mistaken, leads to a place where there is a good view. We could, if you like to go that far, calm our nerves under the open sky instead of down below where that fiend disturbed us—besides, I’d like to see some of my native country.’

‘I’d like to go up there, it can’t be much farther; years ago we went there a few times.’

They reached a high vantage point from which the land lying to the east and to the north could be seen, spread out afar and on the horizon fading away into the distant blue. Under a grove of tall fir trees stood a bench from where their eyes immediately tried to see their home neighbourhood between the lofty, gently spread, rolling hills, and they believed they saw a shimmering white church or school on the sunny slope. Salander called the children to him and showed them the land. ‘I’ve read that in the past few years a study of one’s native land has been introduced, is that true? What canton is that over there?’

They did not know; only the older girl could name the next one, the one in which they lived, the canton of Münsterburg, and she also knew that there were twelve other such districts.

‘Fine! Earlier these were called *Oberämter*, still earlier, *Vogteien*, formerly owned by noblemen and counts,’ pointing with his forefinger from one end of the horizon to the other. The historical recollections awoke and crowded upon one another until the present arose from them, and everything seemed to glorify the visible land to him.

‘The New World on the other side of the ocean,’ he said to his wife after the children had again run away, ‘is certainly beautiful and gay for tired old countries without hope. Everything is started from the ground up; the people are indifferent to one another; and only the adventure of future achievement holds them together for they have no common past and no graves of forefathers. But so long as I can feel the entire development of our people on the old soil where my language has echoed for fifteen

hundred years, there I want to belong—if I can make a living! Unwillingly, however, I'd go away again!'

'For heaven's sake, what put that idea into your head?' Marie Salander cried, frightened.

'I mean just in case!' he answered as calmly as possible in order to hide the fact that he had just dared to drop the first hint of an answer to the problem which had dawned upon him before the evening of the second day of his return.

Week after week passed without Wohwend's case moving a step forward; he knew how to persuade and confuse large and small creditors so that they could not make up their minds, and it was already to be assumed that the year would pass by without any decision being made. Salander, with his bill of exchange which Wohlwend constantly refused to recognise, was shut out of all this. To be sure, his books showed that he had dealings with the Atlantic Shore Bank in Rio and from time to time had received exchange drafts which he allegedly negotiated further. As things stood in Rio de Janeiro at that time, no information was obtainable; and in Münsterburg not only Wohlwend but also the townspeople refused to concede to Salander's demands.

His lawyers believed that it would be best if he were again to undertake the journey to Brazil and there, on the spot, personally instigate whatever was necessary. The cost of the trip would not be in proportion to the losses, and by occasionally engaging in business transactions the trip would be more than paid for.

These suggestions were enough to confirm the already-awakened thoughts of seeking his fortune again. If, from the rest of his earnings which he had kept, he were to subtract his wife's dowry and safely deposit it, with the balance he certainly could then attempt to rejoin the business with which he so recently had served. He felt confident that in a short time he could make a profit and, in addition to this, give his family their proper livelihood.

Quietly he got everything ready; he received valuable offers from various firms, rented a modest but suitable flat for his wife and children, or rather for himself, and finally he began to think of revealing the fact to Marie.

Although this time things were far better than at the time of the first separation, nevertheless she became deeply sorrowful.

They sat face to face at the window of their bedroom through which Marie, in her disconcerted state, had on that morning called out to the beautiful day.

‘As I sat over there in the corner on the floor,’ she said in a half voice after a short time, ‘didn’t you suggest that money might not be the only or the greatest possession in the world which man might strive for? You were so right, Martin, that now I’m giving your words right back to you.’

‘It’s not the same thing!’ Martin answered, ‘it’s not the same as losing courage because of our lost possessions; if we wanted to give up all claim again, we could win back with renewed energy what was lost! I know the way now: should I deliberately avoid it? Think about our children, Marie!’

‘Oh, I am just thinking about them! Do they have to be rich in order to live?’

‘Marie, you know what can happen when there’s no money!’

Then without answering him, she continued:

‘Look, when we sat on the bench up there in the forest and looked out on our homeland, I thought to myself it would perhaps be best for us and the children if you again took a school somewhere around here and let the corrupt world go on its own way! With the money that you have saved we could live comfortably and still save——’

The speech of his wife hit his teacher’s conscience without her knowing it. He was nothing but a deserter. He did not let her finish speaking but gripped her hands:

‘After those strokes of genius which I accomplished with our money. I understand your thought very well—it’s fair and wise! But I can’t do what you ask. In the first place, I hardly would have the necessary practice nor would I have the knowledge and scope which is necessary to begin teaching again, and I’m too old for a refresher course. On the other hand, I feel young enough to stand in the world, acting independently, wherever my mind has led me. For that reason I need that independence which only a modest fortune can bestow; too large a fortune, of course, would only be a hindrance. Just you wait, I’ll succeed! I’ll not stay away so long, and one part of the business will even operate here; an unexpected trip to the home office with a happy meeting resulting is not impossible!’

‘Then take us along!’ she said with a failing voice.

‘In order to expose you to sickness and death? Besides, it can’t be done because the children have to be educated in their native land.’ As he said these words he took her into his arms tenderly and held her until she surrendered to his will.

Next, he took care of moving into the new dwelling which was so situated that, in case of necessity, Mrs. Salander could operate a small store, and he thought that he could supply the merchandise from Brazil especially for her. With this purpose in view a storeroom and a little writing room for Madame Manager were provided on the ground floor.

For the time being, Martin wanted to hire a domestic servant immediately, urging also to hire, as soon as necessary, a young delivery boy. But for the present Marie was opposed to any idea of having servants in the house.

When everything that remained to do was finished, the little family accompanied Martin Salander to the railway station so that they arrived ahead of time. Mr. Möni Wighart arrived more punctually since he had come earlier to linger over a cup of strong beef-tea in the station restaurant, observing the gay traffic of early autumn. He promised the departing traveller to watch secretly Wohlwend’s bankruptcy case and to report exactly what the people thought and talked about.

Then Martin again travelled towards the shores of the Atlantic.

CHAPTER 6

TIME FLOWED QUIETLY over the affairs of men or rather carried them along imperceptibly; and so after three years Frau Marie indeed sat in her little office and recorded in her book the number of sacks of coffee which the delivery man had unloaded and a strong workman had carried into the storeman, and then returned to continue wrapping cigars. It was a popular new kind of tobacco which Martin Salander had sent from the colonies and in part had been planted on his own land, which he had purchased especially for that purpose. A maid servant came to ask the mistress about the evening meal; she received instructions to prepare the Paraguayan tea which they wanted to taste and which Mr. Salander had sent on a trial basis to see if perhaps he could find customers for it. At this moment a country storekeeper brought in the money for a bag of coffee he had received previously and ordered another; a gentleman came and offered to buy a little trial box of cigars like those he had heard of.

The postal agent came to pay her some money; and finally the girls returned home from the secondary school they attended; the elder of the two, Setti, was immediately sent with the receipts to the bank where the little warehouse had an account. This same young girl, who was nearly sixteen, already claimed that by next Easter she would be her mother's book-keeper. Her arithmetic teacher said that she could multiply as fast as a cockchafer.

It was now autumn and evening came early; Mrs. Salander paid her workman his day's wages and dismissed him until tomorrow. After playing very hard Arnold finally came home from the sports ground, and so in the gleam of the old lamp the mother saw her children gathered around her. They enjoyed the simple evening meal which the maid shared with them, and everything was fine until Setti, the future book-keeper, raised

a discussion when she announced that she would probably need to wear glasses in the business.

'Dear me!' the servant girl cried, provoked, 'it would change your looks; you'd look like our old town clerk where I come from.'

'Many great professional women, even the best ones, wear glasses!' the girl replied with superior calm, and Netti agreed, adding that they must be blue ones since they were more becoming.

'Take red glasses, then you'll see stars! '* the quiet, composed Arnold said suddenly. Almost frightened, the mother stared at him.

'Since when do you tell jokes, Arnold?'

Stunned, he looked at his mother for he did not know what she meant or what he had done that was wrong.

The servant laughed. Arnold was right, she asserted. But after being slightly confused Frau Marie collected her wits when she discovered how the boy had come to use the words. It seems remarkable to parents whenever their children use a proverb for the first time.

Someone pulled on the bell; one of the girls ran and brought in a telegram which came from Basel and had been sent by Martin Salander:

'I'm in Switzerland. Arriving on the last train to Münsterburg. Don't meet me as I have to take care of my baggage and will take a cart.'

The surprise which accompanied the message was as serious as it was pleasant, and afterwards they debated whether the order of the father was to be listened to or if they should not go to the station anyway; the mother decided in favour of staying home and waiting because it might be as late as eleven o'clock at night, and Martin could come home all the faster if he did not have to greet the entire family in a crowd of people.

Thereby, the mother gained time in which to analyse the unexpected news thoughtfully. Only three weeks ago she had received Martin's last letter wherein he had expressed satisfaction over his financial situation and announced that he could now

* *Feuer im Elsass*: make you see stars (after a hard knock on the head). The saying probably originated during the raids of old Swiss Armies into Alsace.

think of his return, be it forever or be it for a short time and then only for business reasons. He had promised that he would make the trip at one time or another; he was almost certain, however, that he would be home for good. In the letter, which Marie Salander had only superficially examined and had put aside for a closer reading in a quieter hour, now followed a close reflection upon the present and future political situation in the fatherland. She respected and even loved her husband's liberalism and his inclination to live for the community and the future in which he had already been restrained in such a remarkable manner for ten years now by Louis Wohlwend. However, she claimed no understanding of the relationship of events but satisfied herself by being ready for the day and the moment.

Now she brought out that letter in order to see if she had not skipped a passage which promised an imminent arrival and also to learn through his words, as well as she could, when he would return.

'When you are rejoicing,' he wrote, 'that soon we'll again see better times, you must not attribute it to any particular cleverness and energy on my part but to friendly luck which has accompanied me. To be sure, I also have exerted myself as man sometimes does when he sees a visible goal beckoning. The things which have happened to you at home, this new constitution which our republic has given itself, this absolute right which the people have taken unto themselves quietly and without disturbance, all that I should like to see in its glorious beginnings and enjoy; everything calls to me: Come! Where are you? And, as an independent man who has his land and does not need to search for anything but for the opportunity to help and to be useful, I can come. What a great moment it is in which our old freedom takes such a great step! Round about us the world has, in its great united nations, locked itself in as if with four iron curtains; but at the same time the moral step which we have taken opens a deep source of courage for the freedom and the seriousness of life which lets us endure the utmost and the most difficult and, in the end, overcomes the world be it even in its own decline. Such a feeling of self-determination, of fearlessness and of love of duty is more protection than a repeating rifle and precipitous cliffs, etc.'

There certainly was not anything there about an already-con-

cluded voyage. According to that the urgency must have grown suddenly since then, or perhaps from new, enticing reports or from circulating rumours that Martin could resist no longer.

Before eleven o'clock he appeared, as fresh, cheerful and almost as boisterous as if he were seven years younger rather than three years older and as if a blustering gust of new life had entered with him. And as Marie embraced him, before the power of the ideas which lay in the words of the letter and which now had wafted her husband across the ocean and into her arms, she felt a reverent shyness.

'Hello! What pretty young girls; may I touch them?' he cried as he looked at the two girls and, in spite of that, afterwards kissed them heartily.

'They're also called tenderloins! '* cried Arnold who also wanted to make himself noticed.

'Why you whipper-snapper! What did you say?'

'You've come just in time, dear,' the woman said, laughing loudly and sitting down contentedly, 'your boy has made a joke for the second time today. He seems to have picked up some good-for-nothing words.'

'Let him pick them up, if he uses them at the right time! Come here, Arnold: give me a good Swiss greeting and we'll seal it with a handclasp. Let me see, how much have you grown? Not enough to shout about, but for your eleven years it's all right. And how's school?'

With many interruptions he ate the late supper which had been waiting for him, alternately questioning the boy and girls on school subjects. He noticed that in regard to methods and subjects he was no longer up to date and therefore could not question them properly.

As soon as Mrs. Salander saw that, she did not hesitate any longer in offering her husband her welcoming gift to him, namely, the first jug of fermenting young wine which was just now to be had from the adjoining inn. She knew that he loved that drink but for ten years had not tasted any. At the same time the maid brought in a bowlful of roasted chestnuts which the children were entitled to in celebration of that lucky night. Finally at one o'clock Marie arose; she probably would have done so earlier if the next day had not been a Sunday.

* *Hafenbraten*: tender meat (young girls).

Sunday dawned as a most beautiful autumn day whose morning hours Salander spent in familiar, homely conversation with his family. Only once did an awkward question occur to him but he let it drop, saying to himself: No, today I don't want to talk about it!

At noon he ate with his family; then he unexpectedly declared that he wanted to get out in the fresh air and take a long walk among the people and see how things were. He wanted to walk alone, accompanied only by his thoughts. But at the last moment he changed his mind and allowed the boy to go along. Arnold did not have to be asked twice and importantly strode out of the house at his fathers' side.

The first fruits of the winepress made the streets lively at that season of the year. With his son Salander made a wide tour round the city; dance music which attracted the young people of both sexes was heard above every other noise. A company of marksmen with their rifles going to their last Sunday drills or a group of gymnasts with staffs on their shoulders, occasionally with a drummer leading the way, were to be seen. Among them people of all classes swarmed, happy or indifferent, a few were sullen, cursing about anything at all. But the things he looked for, the breath and splendour of the new age, the spiritedness, the somewhat festive seriousness, he could not discern. In the alleys and in the taverns he heard singing: they were the old songs of which the people, now as before, knew only the first verse and perhaps the last. If someone ventured a middle verse then the others hummed it without singing any of the words. A mob of drunken youths fought on a dusty street as if there were no nobler means of communication for young citizens who are in the habit of thinking about the laws which they helped to make. Every hundred steps a man with a concertina or an empty coat sleeve begged—all the time his arm really lay behind his back. In short, everything was the same as any Sunday in autumn in years gone by; and later in the day it was to be expected that some of the merriest of the men would not be able to stay on their feet any longer.

Salander shook his head slightly as he looked around observantly. He told himself that before the people become accustomed to all great changes a period of transition must take place. However, he had thought that the reality of such an event would make

heaven and earth appear differently. But in the end it is, and it certainly will be, the people's innate decency, their simple habits which will not easily allow them to drape themselves with a presumptuous toga.

They now arrived before a large amusement place which appeared to be full of more rustic people; a loud, constant murmuring issued forth and it sounded like the noise made by lions when they are in a more peaceful mood. Salander asked the boy if he were thirsty, whereupon he answered in the affirmative, and so the two entered the building. A large hall was completely filled with young and older men, among whom a few women sat.

With some difficulty the father and son still found a small, empty table. But they scarcely had sat down and had received some beer when two more came, immediately taking over the remaining places and, without further ado, likewise ordering beer. One was evidently a South German, the other Swiss and obviously from the district of Münsterburg. The latter wore a moustache and goatee cut in the French style and had his hat shoved back on his head so as to appear bold. They carried on a loud conversation and without caring about themselves or anyone else proceeded forthwith.

'As I said before,' continued the Swiss in almost brutal tones, 'you know me! I'm a fellow who doesn't let himself be fooled!'

'And who wants to fool you? Certainly not I,' interjected the other.

'I didn't say who, I was just speaking in general terms. There's the letter which my former employer in St. Gallen wrote to me. I can go back there any time I want!'

He produced a letter and gave it to his comrade who read it and acknowledged that it was a nice letter, not everyone could exhibit the same evidence; a flattering letter, to be sure.

'It doesn't say anything flattering; it doesn't need to. I don't need any flunky. I'm a free man, independent, proud if you wish, but I despise flattery.'

'I certainly didn't flatter you; how could I flatter? And that's the honest truth.'

'That's it! But I'm not going back there, I don't want to tie myself down for a long time yet and I know that he only wants to burden me with his daughter. I admit that I might be caught; the landlady I have at the present time has a daughter who's

always underfoot. But I don't want to be spliced! I don't want to establish myself as a master of my trade although I've got twenty years under my belt. I'd only be a fool and have to slave. I'd rather annoy the bosses.'

'Yes, yes, in my opinion you're a smart fellow!'

'Probably. Just so you think so.'

'As for me, unfortunately, I have a wife and child and equally unfortunately, I'm master of my trade; that's how things are, I'm tied down and a poor devil.'

'Why did you get married so soon!'

'It was of my own doing because I didn't want to go home anymore;* I told myself, you get married here at the first opportunity and then you'll be settled for life.'

'Ha, I can well understand that you'd rather be in Switzerland! But all you Germans can't settle here no matter how nice it is.'

'You people are all right. Zounds! I've already thought about it many times. And nobody is worthy of even untying your shoelaces.'

'Hm, you didn't have to tell me that; I don't take any flattery. Of course I don't let flies get married on my nose!' The Swiss ferociously stroked his moustache and touched his drinking glass to that of the German: 'Drink up; I'll pay for another.'

Martin Salander listened with astonishment to the conversation which evidenced commonplace thinking and unbridled vanity, while saying to himself: This accursed fellow. This common workman has established himself very well; like ants get aphids which they milk so he behaves like a personal flatterer—a cockroach as they're called here!

But there was more to come. The Swiss workman began uttering self-praises such as are spoken only by very poorly-reared individuals who, besides, think and feel in common terms. But the more he boasted and extolled his virtues the more meek his German companion became or at least so pretended. God Himself would like to know what reason that crafty one had for paying court to that churl.

But the more humbly he showed himself the more wanton the other became.

'You're a shrewd one,' he cried, 'you know enough to value

* Under the system existing at that time young journeymen worked abroad for at least one year in the home of a master craftsman.

your being in Switzerland and under a government such as this. Look at me ! We govern and do everything ourselves, just as we want it; and I'm one of these fellows who asks neither God nor the devil for advice. Even before this day is over, I'm going to a conference over a law which has more than a thousand sections, and tomorrow I'm going to skip work. The boss can get up and work. Can you appreciate that?'

'I always say, I'm ashamed that I'm a German! '

'You're not very far from being right, you too have energetic fellows in Germany. Just pay close attention to us and you'll learn something.'

Salander could not contain himself any longer. Flushed with anger he pounded on the table and shouted at the German. 'You ought to be ashamed of yourself, talking like that when you have such a mighty fatherland! And you, Mr. Compatriot,' he turned to the man from Münsterburg, 'you ought to be ashamed of yourself for affronting an innocent stranger in such a manner and letting him praise and extol you! I've been in America for ten years and nowhere did I hear such vain outpourings and boastings like yours. We're in a fine situation here if the younger generation babbles as foolishly as jays and old midwives! Zounds! '

In his silly excitement he had shouted so loudly that the people at the surrounding tables had turned around and listened. At first his fellow countryman had looked at him astonished; now he was already on his feet, pointing with his finger and shouting:

'Who are you? Who ordered you to eavesdrop?'

'I didn't eavesdrop! You two came here with your talking when I was already seated! '

'Nevertheless, you're still a sneak! If you don't like what we say, move. You're nothing but a spy and a person who hates others! '

He shook the little table, which stood between them so much that the glasses tinkled; the spectators crowded closer and several asked what was the matter with him.

'He's accusing us young people of being vain fools and midwives whenever we praise our freedom and our fatherland.'

The German also lost his good-naturedness and began to make a noise.

Salander looked at his son, took him by the hand and all of a

sudden pressed through the crowd and out of the hall, not without having first given the table, with which the others wanted to attack him, a strong push. He had a good mind to tame the awakened demon or lion with firm talk; only the concern for his child, that he should not see his father abused and humbled before his eyes, caused him to withdraw from all further disputes.

Full of disgust and shame he looked for the shortest way home; he was, however, happy to meet Mr. Möni Wighart whom, for it was still early in the day, he followed gladly into a small inn in order to recover from the previous incident and to provide for the boy a friendly end to the walk. But in the corner of the inn they met the lawyer whom Salander had once entrusted with his affairs. Here that busy man, like an honest master mechanic, was recovering from his week's work with a small Sunday drink. However, upon the unexpected appearance of his client he displayed readiness to discuss the Wohlwend affair and to give advice over a glass of beer. Martin Salander therefore soon sent his boy home with the report that he would follow in an hour or two.

Unfortunately there was not much to discuss for things stood in the same old place. In Rio the affair was almost completely shelved. The responsible persons of the Atlantic Shore Bank had been pursued a long time; however they sneaked away, always at the proper moment, from country to country, only delaying in such places where not only no one was extradited but where the money found on them was not impounded; generally speaking, where there was no law at all. Once or twice one was interrogated and the miserable result was sent in an official notice but the individual in question was set free along with his money which evidently stemmed from the safe of the Shore Bank—and this even happened on English soil. All these things had cost so much that Salander was afraid, as he put it, of throwing the holy water font after the devil.

Still there were business people in Brazil who maintained that Martin's celebrated bill of exchange was drawn in all honesty because at that moment the Shore Bank did not think of going bankrupt. Just now there was no documentary evidence to be found concerning it.

In Münsterburg, Wohlwend, after long negotiation in which Salander's claim did not even come into consideration, had been

able to make a settlement with his creditors at a paltry percentage of return. The account which the Atlantic Shore Bank had in Europe was confiscated on Salander's behalf, but the sum of his bill of exchange could not be subtracted from it because of the lack of favourable information; the lawyer had nothing to base his case upon other than the mysterious rejected bill of exchange. Afterwards Wohlwend disappeared from the region. The contractor had to take back Wohlwend's house and he lost money on that deal. The painter of Arnold von Winkelried received nothing at all.

'I am convinced,' the lawyer said, 'that he has eluded bankruptcy for more than ten years directly by means of that bond money which you were forced to pay immediately; I also believe that this time he was able to make a settlement with his creditors, miserly though it was, because of your money, part or all of which he got into his claws for naturally he kept the lion's share for himself. But yet I cannot help saying that it is an interesting matter as far as the legal aspects are concerned. After I had recovered from the surprise caused by his consistently cold, silent expression which he assumed constantly when confronted with the bill of exchange, and without ever embarrassing himself, I hit upon the idea of undertaking a somewhat unusual experiment with him. I know a very skilled psychiatrist who, as director of a foreign sanatorium, treats those people who cleverly feign madness when they want to escape standing trial. He has had considerable practice in examining them and as a rule brings these rascals back to their senses, insofar as they were given to them originally, within a few days or hours. Of course, he doesn't confine himself to the limits which the examining judge has indicated. When that man stopped here one day I told him about Louis Wohlwend and his peculiar behaviour. We agreed that he should go to Wohlwend and tell him he was a representative of one of the foreign partners of the overseas banking house and that he had had consultation with me; and under the pretext of a business trip he should observe him and obtain information. He succeeded in detaining him longer than an hour but could not get anything out of him. There are, said the doctor, odd men who have the power to remove an embarrassing fact, so to say, out of their consciousness so completely that not even once in their sleep, to say nothing of when they are awake, do they talk about

it if they do not wish to. And not by any means are they all mentally strong people; on the contrary, they are those who lack every need to come to terms with themselves. This shortcoming combines then with a vulgar shyness to develop into a practical power. Only the approach of death has the power, sometimes, to break the charm. Mr. Wohlwend seems to belong in this category, if only as a mutation of the breed. During the conversation he did nothing which indicated a forced caution but, completely calm, he chattered easily, seemingly attentive and pretending as if he were looking for good advice, shaking his head and finally saying: "It's a silly awkward business! I would advise your client to do like that other one, Mr. Salander, and go to Rio personally; there something could be accomplished rather than here." Meanwhile he concerned himself with the contents of an old cardboard box; dozens of torn butterflies and beetles, all covered with dust, were piled together in a little heap in it. He was selecting, sorting and sticking these old creatures upon fresh corks; finally he cried in a very deep voice: "Yes, yes, my dear man! Without this little science one would very often not have the courage to live in the confusion of this world. Didn't you ever take an interest in learning about insects?"

The men were silent for some time in order to reflect upon what could be done further about the annoying presence of such a troublesome fellow who, to some extent, had the ability to shut up like a clam whenever he observed that he was going to be questioned.

In the meantime, Möni Wighart had touched his nose with his finger and then suddenly shouted:

"What's wrong with me? Something pertinent is going around in my head but was pushed back by the surprise of today. Of course! It's not long ago that I heard from a timber merchant of this region who had seen Louis Wohlwend deep in Hungary, lively as a fish, and married to a beautiful young woman who had already blessed him with two small children! I can't remember the place anymore. I asked that merchant if he'd spoken to him. Indeed he had, and Wohlwend told him how through his happy marriage not only a pretty little wife but also a nice dowry had come into his possession. But he was not able to talk to him for very long because he had left abruptly. Asking about the affair later in an inn, residents of that area confirmed, with

details, that Wohlwend's father-in-law was a dealer in pigs and had settled not only a nice fortune on one of his daughters before her marriage but also legally appointed him his heir and had had the yearly interest assigned to Wohlwend. Of course some people doubted the story because the father-in-law is by no manner of means so wealthy that he can share such an inheritance which each daughter; on the other hand, others point out that the young girl concerned is a daughter from an earlier marriage and she received only what was her mother's; a third group asserts that she is not the pig-dealer's own daughter but a wealthy lady had given birth to her and had the child cared for by that man.'

'In a word,' said Martin Salander, 'my Louis Wohlwend has, without any doubt about it, fooled a pig dealer in eastern Europe.'

'Hm!' the lawyer said, 'I'd almost rather say an eastern dealer in pigs has fooled Master Louis!'

'Why so?'

'Why so? What would you say to his having very secretly removed his booty, those nice *Contos de Reis* belonging to Mr. Martin Salander, to the borders of Turkey and in this ingenious manner there converting them into a dowry. And what would you say to that cunning fellow, that Croesus of suckling pigs, knowing how to cheat him out of both capital and interest and, on top of all, leave him with that little wife on his neck? After what I had been told by the psychiatrist the only thing that startles me is the talkativeness with which he revealed himself to the timber merchant. He must have been just a little gay or, like Homer, have taken a short nap! Mr. Wighart, the fact that two pike are probably waiting for the same fish, at this time prevents me from asking you to contact your confidant regarding names, places and persons. I still want to think over my theories for some days, then I'll call upon you—naturally with the consent of my client—if he still considers himself as such. Indeed, immediately it would be a case for prosecution under laws governing criminal actions, and the authorities would then have just cause to act.'

'Yes, think about it, Mr. Advocate!' answered Salander. 'In the end it wouldn't do any harm if we could chase around, or at least arouse that pike, Schadenmüller.'

The three men conversed for another quarter hour and then each one started to go his own way. Martin Salander went towards home.

The impressions which he had carried away from his stroll among the new people and from the scene with the braggart arose again as he walked along under the starry heavens; and the tortuous relationship with his old friend Wohlwend, to whom he seemed bound with iron chains, darkened his dismal spirit even more than it had previously.

He intended to warn the lawyer about prosecuting Wohlwend further so that that creature would slip from his mind just that much more quickly. But in spite of this resolution it required the friendly lighted living room into which he stepped and the children gathered around the table waiting for him, to acquire a lighter heart. His wife who saw his troubled eyes came too late with her solicitious appeal.

Soon afterward, when Martin went to his lawyer, he found him already swerving from his plan of bringing about an official investigation into the nature of Wohlwend's wife's dowry. It did not appear to be feasible to him to proceed to distant lands on the basis of uncertain rumours and conjectures. If they threw out the bait now it would not be swallowed, but if they held it back then it could, some day, unexpectedly become useful to them.

CHAPTER 7

MARTIN LOST NO TIME in again taking up his business, that is, preparing for its continuation in the Münsterburg territory. He rented the necessary space for the office and warehouse, and, sure enough, soon a clerk sat at the desk and an apprentice ran to and fro. Frau Marie pleaded to have her little business remain in the home, and he agreed with pleasure as he had thought of assigning to her certain details, the mastery of which appeared to him to be too complex and not worth his own time. But it turned out that his honest wife did not agree with everything that easily since she already had business principles which would do honour even to an old established firm. She would be satisfied not with a large stock but with reputable merchandise for which she had definite buyers. The latter increased at a constant though comfortable pace so that she was never forced to procure her stock in an unsystematic manner. Briefly, her business was one of those which one tends to call a little gold mine.

The husband avoided disturbing her in this matter and gladly allowed her to continue in her own way of separate book-keeping which he had examined and had found in order. To be sure, he had to fish out debits and credits from her various notebooks and booklets; and Marie Salander watched him somewhat anxiously to see what would come out of it yet she laughed merrily as finally everything stood in its place, in red and black ink, balanced and proved to the last franc.

Thus Martin Salander and his family again resided in the old place and could look peaceably out upon the world and into the years as far as men may dream. For him who does not struggle to surpass World and Time, they voluntarily come rolling to his feet.

In spite of the illusion which was dissolved so dismally by his Sunday stroll among the people, he again felt compelled to focus his vision upon public affairs and to familiarise himself with them as they now presented themselves. The new constitution

which the *Burghers* of Münsterburg had accepted was praised by the most advanced friends of state and society of foreign lands and with it the goals that were desired could be attained. With some determination on the part of the people the same principles which could have been made acceptable to them in a moderate or modest sense ought now to suffice even in their present form, thus introducing, day by day, the tremendous changes which these same people had never dreamed of.

In these first years things hummed like a beehive what with proposed laws and voting, and Salander observed with amazement how in the dark corners of a little beerhall two schemers could readily formulate a small law or decree costing millions—and without one word coming from the people's government. In addition, the numerous elections of officials both large and small, in Administration, Law, School and Community, kept the voters continually on the alert. As Martin Salander did not neglect any of these duties, he himself did not realise that he was in the middle of the stream. In order to become better informed he visited political gatherings, began to join in the discussion and to make proposals; since his independence was known and one knew, therefore, that he did not want anything for himself, he was elected to all sorts of committees whose work he did with honest zeal, although he was obliged to travel around within the country and he really was no wayfarer.

On these scattered by-ways he came into government circles, to the immediate leaders of the people who, as travelling teachers, explained to the people the more difficult points of their self-determination; that is, they had to appeal to those individuals who were capable of becoming better informed.

Of course there were subjects with which he himself was not familiar; therefore, he had to familiarise himself with them quickly beforehand or the printed official documents would have had to have been defended at their face value. While commonly observing it in others, he did not allow himself to become guilty of that. Sometimes a gloomy presentiment would creep up on him as if the top, middle and lower levels of career politicians had lowered their standards a little bit so that the somewhat poorer quality of one level caused and explained that of the other levels. But he again took courage, relying upon the good, safe soil of the people which steadily brings forth straight, high

stalks. And then, although no longer a youth, he promised to pay attention to himself never knowingly to become a common 'pusher' and never to help lower the standard as he imagined it should be.

However, being true to such a praiseworthy intent, he again experienced disgust similar to that which he felt after his first walk following his return from Brazil. On a Sunday afternoon he was in his own home town taking part in a discussion on the food problem which is the same in all civilized states and undergoes the same dispassionate, clear, unbiased treatment. But here it was a matter of a proposal which was not only peculiar but also quite senseless, foolishly contrived by one single head and which in that region had found some acceptance. Martin Salander should in agreement with his friends fight it. At first he listened to the argument of the proposal and to a number of additional speeches in which always the words 'republic,' republican,' 'honour of the republic,' and so forth were spoken and shouted by untrained, mostly younger people. This boasting about the republic on each appropriate and inappropriate occasion had depressed him for some time now although he was a sincere republican in regard to his fatherland. As he now rose to make his proposal he felt himself compelled to start voting with a speech; the men present seemed to him to need well-intentioned advice.

'Fellow citizens!' he began with all possible calm, 'before I state my various opinions on the forthcoming matter, I cannot refrain from alluding to the word "republic" which is also dear to me and which we certainly have heard two dozen times in the past hour. Our ancestors have, in heated battle, proved and strengthened the republic for almost six hundred years without once saying that word, and the many old documents and land-deed books of the confederation do not contain it. Not until later did the patricians and the citizens of the ruling cities make use of it in their own behalf—in order to bestow with that word an antique lustre to their earthly glory. Now we have it in our everyday speech—but not in order to abuse it. It seems to me that whoever utters it and at the same time strikes his breast, could be just as guilty of hypocrisy as any other Pharisee or hypocrite. Now it is no concern of ours, worthy citizens, but I should like to call your attention to the fact that everything which the citizen of a republic needs must be earned rather than paid

for in words; the republic has no vote in the laws of nature as Providence does not submit to the republic, for acceptance or rejection, its plans for the weather favourable to the farmer just as it does not submit them to the subjects of the king—or to the kings themselves; and worldly intercourse has no regard for the constitutions of the states in the lands or of the continents through which it streams. I took the liberty of remarking on these things before I conveyed my view to you, and in doing that I had intended to deal more with the actual situation than has been done thus far.’

This unexpected sermon had not been well thought out. A grumbling had been heard for some time already, and now one of the speakers broke in and demanded to be recognised.

‘The reactionary movement seems to be rather hasty! After only a few years have gone by a native of the region like Mr. Martin Salander, a former teacher in the elementary school, now rolling in money, cannot swallow the word republic. Under such conditions it cannot be expected that those who still confess to it listen to hostile speeches in a serious meeting. If no one wants to speak further, will someone move to end the discussion and then the voting will begin.’

Salander, who remained standing, would have wanted to continue. Some who did not understand the affair supported him; others, for whom the meaning of his speech was also too lofty, seemed suspicious and got excited about it; a hubbub arose in which those who readily understood how Martin meant it but hated what he intended and did not want to admit it, prevailed.

He was not recognised by the chairman; a counter-proposal was not passed and the matter concerned was closed and resolved. In the course of time it faded away and vanished without further ado; Martin Salander today was richer by one experience. He quit the house and the large village without seeing any other inhabitants and instead of taking the train by which he had come, he took a footpath which twisted through fields and forests towards Münsterburg.

On this lonesome way he could ponder over the suppression of his moral sincerity, as far as was expedient not only for the highest statesmen but also for a man of the people. In the end he thought, I’m happy that I said what I did! The germ of the idea was put in their heads; if they publish a story about the

event in the newspapers, then I'll really start to preach loudly that the word republic is no stone which can be passed off to the people like bread.

This sincere intention brightened his somewhat angry spirits; with vigorous strides he climbed the knolls which still separated him from the city, and the long midsummer day allowed him to reach the summit before sunset where a surprise awaited him. On a freshly mowed meadow partially surrounded by woods, the owner of the nearest farm* had put up a little amusement place by setting several long tables in the shade of the trees and on the meadow he had turned over a large barrel. On this sat three unassuming musicians who played slow dance music. For some time now Martin had heard this wistful artlessness through the still air, but now he caught sight of a group of young people who noiselessly danced around in loose circles; in the golden after-glow the elongated shadows of the dancers played along on the green-gold earth.

Salander took delight in the scene.

A picture like that out of another world, he thought, how peaceful and profoundly happy. But what company is this? Most of the people are well-dressed, some elegantly, others more simply. They're young girls and boys!

But as he stepped closer how astonished he was to recognise his own daughters who were now eighteen and nineteen years of age, slender and charming, and who were dancing with the younger boys who did not appear less handsome and who were already as tall as the maidens.

With his eyes Salander could not help but follow the first pair, Netti and her friend, and to take a good look at the merry boy. He was a fine, nimble young lad whose blond, wavy hair shimmered and flew in the golden sunshine.

While he gazed after the pair, they were lost to his sight so he looked for the other girl, Setti, whom he had also noticed from afar. And just then she swept past, but, as it seemed to him, with the same blond-haired youth that Netti had.

The thought went through his mind: the weather witches have fine talents, they already know how to trade boys. I'd better see about that.

* To passersby many farmers serve meals and/or drink, and in this respect they are sometimes also called innkeepers.

He allowed the lovers to pass and gazed after them closely while Netti came around again from the other side, still with the same boy at her side; they came closer but this time they stopped directly in front of him because the music had stopped.

'Why, there's Father! Did you come and look for us knowing that we were here?' the daughter said, delighted to the bottom of her heart.

'How should I have known that? I came here quite by accident! What kind of a dance is this? Is Setti here, too?'

'Naturally, and so's Mother and Arnold; they're sitting at a table over there. Because you had said that you'd return on the last train at around ten o'clock, she offered to come up on the mountain with us.'

Salander wanted to question her regarding the identity of her dance partner who now took off his hat for the second time when her sister came with her partner to where the others were, and the two young men, standing side by side, only made Martin more astonished.

'These are Isidor and Julian Weidelich, Arnold's schoolmates!' explained the eldest daughter.

'Indeed?' Martin said, without remembering immediately the occurrence at the fountain in front of the Finch, since which seven or eight years must have elapsed. 'Are you also in the Gymnasium?'

'But not in the same class for we're somewhat younger,' said Julian. 'We're only together during singing lessons.'

'So—a couple of twins, unquestionably! And where do you live?'

'We live at the Finch, not far from the *Kreuzhalde*.'

Now the recollection dawned upon him; little by little he saw the rotund little boys with their aprons. Luckily there was no remaining trace to be seen in the grown-up boys standing before him.

'And what's your Mama doing? Is she still alive?' he questioned further.

'She's over there at the table, too, and quite well,' was the answer.

'I'm pleased to hear that. And do you young people like to study, too? What are you studying for, if I may ask?'

'We don't know yet. Perhaps law; one of us may study medicine,' said Julian; Isidor joined in:

'We could also become professors if we wish because they are being well-paid just now, so Mama says—only we should stay in this district.'

'Good!' answered Mr. Salander, 'now we'd like to see where our mother is. Come, children!'

The daughters showed him the way and the youths, who were by no manner of means bashful, followed at their heels while the musicians struck up new dance music.

Frau Marie was very glad to see her husband unexpectedly standing before her. She sat with the forest green directly behind her, among simple, homely people who refreshed themselves with inexpensive food and drink, with weak but wholesome wine, sweet milk, black bread and cabbage and bacon pie. Next to her sat Mrs. Amalie Weidelich, as robust as ever, so as to be able to preside over a kettle of lye. She evidently thrived splendidly for she was very dressed-up, wore a gaily coloured hat of flowers and a gold watch on a long chain lay on her bosom. Her broad face shone beneath her deep tan; two pink patches high on her cheek bones, and her full chin and nose only testified to the industry of the woman who had to govern a house full of laundresses and ironers and whose numerous refreshments she sampled—as was only fair. Early on winter mornings before the coffee in the huge pot had boiled, there was even a small glass of cherry or nut water.

She greeted Mr. Martin Salander in a very friendly manner and completely unembarrassed.

'Just think,' cried Mrs. Weidelich, 'we didn't even know that we were neighbours once years ago! Now our sons are in school!' She looked at her boys with pride and then looked benevolently at the Salanders.

'Arnold went into the wood to look for plants,' Mr. Salander remarked, 'Go tell him to come, girls, so we can think of starting home. The sun is going to set soon.'

'There's plenty of time,' answered Mrs. Weidelich. 'We've plenty of menfolk along with us! Yes, yes, Mr. Salander! You've made your way courageously and now you're a rich man, so I honestly believe! But isn't it true that wealth is only enjoyable if there are fine children to whom it can be turned over? Thank

God that things are going smoothly for us too. Everything that we gather together we'll sacrifice for our two sons and for their future. I hope the sacrifice will be justified for in their apprenticeship and everything else that's needed they shouldn't be in need of anything. We would've liked to have had a new house built in the Finch to replace the old farmer's hut. But no! We say it'll do for as long as we're alive, and no one knows at all where our sons will settle down and build. So we'd rather hold on to the money and get along somehow.'

She wanted to glance at her twins again but did not find them, so her eyes immediately began to look for them.

The two Salander girls did not have to look long in the depths of the wool for their brother Arnold. They had called him only a few times and then had returned again under the trees at the edge of the forest. There, with arms linked around each other's waists, they exhibited sisterly love or maidenly friendship, strolling up and down, escorted on the right and left by the twins.

Mama Weidelich observed the procession.

'Look!' she said, moved by what she saw. 'How sweetly the young people are strolling there. It's almost as if they were two pairs of little engaged couples.'

'And why not,' said Mrs. Salander laughingly, 'the two girls would be at least old enough for the boys and they don't have to grow any more either!'

'That doesn't matter,' the other mother said in return, 'my boys will become young men; it would take two ordinary boys to make one of them.'

Frau Marie was unpleasantly affected by these jokes as she looked towards the children and noted how, at the beginning of a waltz, they were at the point of wheeling off again to the middle of the dance meadow. Each of the daughters was on the arm of one of the twins; she arose quickly and went to get them.

'Setti and Netti, what in the world are you thinking of!' she called to them in a firm voice, 'wanting to begin dancing again; the sun has already set and we'll soon be leaving. Just come along and gather your things together.'

Without showing any visible grief the girls obediently allowed their youths to go; the latter, however, blushed and were embarrassed, which did not escape the woman's notice and annoyed her a little for it did not seem fitting to her that the little swains

should be so shy. They played with their silver watch chains but followed the woman to the small table.

Their own mother received them with burning glances.

'What kind of a performance is this, you rascals?' she called to them, 'dancing with these girls, and where did you learn that?'

'Why, you certainly know that, Mama, at the dancing teacher's.'

'Silence! Of course I know it! Thank God that you've parents who do everything for you that lies in their power! And your father slaves from dawn to dusk, year in and year out he drudges, buys land, plants it and sweats and in winter imports vegetables from France and even from as far away as Algiers. For he says the costs really only start when you are students, and we must be ready to spend thousands. Mr. Salander, I've heard that you could become a councillor any moment you wished. Well, you are a merchant, that's also fine, and in addition, a kind of independent councillor. But a pair of learned councillors or advocates or ministers as these two rascals here! Isn't that rather nice?'

With very happy eyes she winked at her sons who had poured out the wine which was left in the bottle, thoroughly extinguishing their thirst.

'Drink and eat,' she cried, 'and may it do you some good! Should I order still another half?'

The youths declined for they had not advanced to that age where one is accustomed to drink more than is needed to quench the thirst.

'Well then we want to break up, the soup'll soon be done, and your father will also have taken care of the milk. Then he goes for a small Sunday glass of beer—that he's not to be denied. Forward, march, you rascals! I'll bet that someday when you wear the white cap or perhaps the red one, you'll not think of coming home until the night is half gone, but somebody will set you straight on that—just wait! Now I'll politely pay my compliments to the men and to the lady and take pleasure in the honoured acquaintance, let us hope not for the last time; and these young ladies—listen, you scamps, can't you say "thank you for the nice time" instead of standing there like poor boys in church?'

More shyly and more awkwardly condescending than was to be expected after their bold dancing, the boys shook the girls'

hands and said good night. Finally the happy mother left with her sons, and now it was more quiet.

Martin Salander would have liked to have rested a little while because he had a three hour hike behind him; the son, Arnold, who appeared with a bushy handful of forest plants, threw them on the table so he could sort them. He discovered that he had returned too late for something to eat and drink but he had the advantage of sharing an extra glass of beer with his father; the mother and sisters had only milk with pieces of bread in it.

Salander asked how they happened to fall into the company of the Weidelich family.

'That I scarcely know myself,' said Frau Marie. 'We had just taken our seats here when all of a sudden we were in the middle of them. Arnold is, as it appears, acquainted with the young men.'

'I've already asked them in a joking manner,' Arnold now related, 'whether they still remember how as little boys they had squirted water at me at the fountain near the Finch because I said "mother" and not "mama". They thought that was quite funny and no doubt they have retold it at home where the parents may also have recalled the incident. Today they have, as I observed, secretly told their mother that I am that boy and all of us are those people from the *Kreuzhalde* of whom there was so much talked of later.'

'Then she appeared,' continued the mother, 'and she bothered me while the poor musicians played louder, and she didn't have any peace until her sons could show their dancing ability which our two jumping jacks there, of course, found quite agreeable!'

'But they do dance very well!' cried Setti and Netti, 'and they still take dancing lessons!'

'Thank God,' answered Frau Marie, 'I can still see how they opened their mouths so wide while we starved, waiting for the leftovers which they devoured.'

'Oh, they were only children! We also would have swallowed it if someone had stuck buttered bread with honey into our mouths,' said the girls.

'Such twins are still troublesome and puzzling,' the father said. 'At least I can't tell one from the other at all!'

'Oh, they have their own characteristics!' Netti cried almost

saucily. 'Julian's left earlobe is a little twisted, very daintily, somewhat like a little piece of *Spritzkuchen*. I saw it whenever his wavy hair rose and fell.'

'That's rather remarkable,' joined in Setti. 'The other one, Isidor, I believe his name is, has his right earlobe twisted exactly like a little egg noodle!'

'That's quite exceptional scholarship!' their brother exclaimed with dry humour, 'They are simply either the survivors of an extinct race or the first of a new one to come! Have your earlobes examined, girls! If you exhibit similarities then be careful or, following the theory of selectivity, the twins will choose you for their wives in order to establish a new kind of ear-twisted men. Or would you rather marry them voluntarily?'

The mother placed her hand over his mouth, for he sat nearby, and said: 'Silence, you scamp, if you don't know anything more sensible to babble about from school than such nonsense!' But the father laughed and said: 'You are alright, Arnold! And now we should wander towards home, otherwise it will be too dark for we have a new moon. But the stars are coming out beautifully; see, one after the other!'

CHAPTER 8

THE WEIDELICH SONS continued growing taller and thriving; their bearing was upright and full of visible satisfaction in the sensation they provoked when they were together. By way of spiritual endowments they lacked nothing except, perhaps, persistence in completing their proposed studies. As they became upper classmen and the life of learning daily became more serious and profound to them, Julian was the first who did not 'want to' anymore. He deserted and joined a notary's office. Although Isidor held out until the end, he did not take part in the examinations for admittance to the university but for a half year listened to several legal lectures as a so-called auditor and then he too took shelter in a notary's office.

Both possessed an even, beautiful handwriting, a beautiful script which, as a rule, is not a characteristic of aspiring scholarliness since it has different needs. Both loved to indulge in painting calligraphical sleights of hand. They showed themselves to be very useful in the business and by daily experience acquired, almost playfully, the knowledge basic to office work.

Father Weidelich was not pleased with his sons; he asked them if that was all the glory they would like to attain. The mama, on the other hand, was well satisfied: 'The boys are wiser than we,' she said, 'they know what they're doing all right. Don't they know how to do everything they're told? Why should they rack their brains like the other fools?'

And because now they earned their own money instead of causing further unending costs, the father was also satisfied and remained so because, scarcely at the age of twenty, the twins had been promoted from deputies to substitute clerks and, thereby, immediately possessed legal certificates allowing them to become notaries in their own right.

About this time it chanced that one more strange phenomenon of amorous passion was, or became, known to the world.

Martin Salander thought he noticed that his two daughters and their mother were no longer on familiar, confiding terms with each

other, and that the daughters behaved and lived together as if in secretive agreement; the mother, on the other hand, seemed filled with deep seriousness, if not sorrow, which she was not always successful in concealing especially since she was no longer occupied with her little business. Salander, whose main business flourished steadily without undue effort, perhaps because he did not speculate, was more occupied with his private hobbies or duties and no longer wanted to stand by as Frau Marie slaved unnecessarily as a tradeswoman. Therefore, for a good sum of money, he turned over the branch business to an energetic young merchant and, without too much opposition on her part, retired his fine wife. Without tolerating any contradiction, he had added to her dowry which he had long since safely deposited all of the profits, which amounted to a considerable sum of money, so that she should not be dependent on him and his lucky or unlucky star, and in the event of his death she should not be dependent on the children during precarious times. Since she could no longer duck behind the office desk with the thoughts and sorrows that oppressed her, her face lay open to her husband and he asked what was going on.

If the woman had wanted to talk she would have done so on her own account but with downcast eyes she rubbed her hands as if they were a little chilled. Then she said:

‘A brick has fallen on our heads!’

‘A brick? Off which roof?’ Martin asked apprehensively since from his wife’s seriousness he concluded something critical—even dangerous.

‘I can’t keep it to myself any longer! Our daughters have an affair!’

‘What, both with the same man?’ her husband asked smilingly, somewhat relieved that it did not amount to anything worse.

His wife continued in deadly seriousness.

‘No, it is a double love affair; briefly they’ve become engaged to the twin clerks from the Finch!’

‘The witches! How did that happen? When? How? Where? I must investigate this—slowly of course. That is a piece of news even if it doesn’t immediately make a hole in the head!’

‘That penetrated deeply enough into my head. Just think, two girls twenty-five and twenty-six years of age want to marry twenty-year-old twins! That’s an unheard of adventure—both

the age and the twins! If they were old women who took younger husbands, as often happens, people laugh and that's that! But girls in the bloom of their years, yet still at the border of their youth, to make such a choice; coxcombs not old enough to shave—two sisters, two twins!'

'Well, this sounds like a novel to me and one that's not exactly pleasing to me; yet love steadily makes such pranks; isn't it said a hundred times over that things which are experienced are often more shocking than those which are invented?'

'Yes, yes, and they are mostly just that, thank you very much! Oh, my dear, we certainly have made a mistake in not sending the children out into the world and in not allowing them to learn anything resembling a profession! You said that whoever is able to keep his daughters at home should do so; and you didn't want to hear anything about boarding schools, still less about their going to work. That you called taking the bread from the mouths of those poorer than we and at best a shabby attempt whenever there wasn't a definite talent which, of course, should be developed. You mused about the independent daughters and wives who do not need to degenerate into bondage and I agreed with you because I myself was deluded by our luck although I knew how much easier it would have been for me if at one time I had learned a skill of some kind. You mustn't take it the wrong way; it's not intended to be the slightest reproach!'

'I don't understand it that way, either, my dear wife, because I know exactly how well you battled your way through the world. That they had cut down the trees on the *Kreuzhalde* was neither your fault nor mine.'

'Forget about that; I'll only say this, if the girls had not had such complete leisure and freedom at their disposal then they hardly would have devised that repulsive adventure! Now what are we going to do about those twin vegetables? And, what's more, with that inflated washerwoman?'

'Indeed, as for her, she certainly is a rough shell, yet she conceals the pearl of motherly devotion! Still, with all that, I don't know exactly what's really happening. Have they revealed it to you?'

'God forbid! They're of age. In due time they would have surprised their parents, of course; then too, it could be, as I certainly believe, that none of the children on their own account

would have been sly and inconsiderate towards us, but the confounded double team has turned the sad story into a clandestine plot. . . .’

‘Dear Marie,’ Martin interrupted, ‘let’s drop the question of propriety for the time being. You can’t seriously maintain that twins are not allowed to marry, nor can you assert that two sisters are forbidden to accept them if they’re pleasing to them.’

‘I didn’t claim all that; I only say that in our case it doesn’t please me, it isn’t convenient for me and it worries me because it is an unhealthy whim! Think of what a pair of unripe boys our grown daughters have aimed at and have bagged, while the foolish girls in possession of the beautiful secret have rejected the best chances to get husbands. At one time we enjoyed their nearly secluded life, their living like nuns, wearing dark clothes and veils; at other times we were sorry that they didn’t want to enjoy their young lives more gaily. To be sure, they have enjoyed it in their own way—you must realise that the youngsters had a rendezvous together whenever they wished—moonlit nights, sunrises in summer, long walks in spring and ice skating in winter—after being silent for a whole year our old servant has told me about everything. And why? Because she had quarrelled at the market with the Weidelich woman who wanted to pass off airs and act as someone high and mighty. She spread the rumour that our daughters were, in any case, worth a half million apiece; that bit of gossip one heard everywhere! Magdalene didn’t want to stand for this gossiping and revealing of confidences and she ventured to answer that she didn’t investigate into what her employers owned and the like. Whereupon the other countered that because she was a domestic servant she was right in not prying into her employer’s affairs; she, Mrs. Weidelich, was in that case the better able to take care of the investigation of how much of a fortune these or those people had. She shouldn’t be too curious our maid answered again, things are not yet cut and dried. If a washerwoman wanted to wash in cold water she could always put two tubs out in the rain and that would give her some soft water to wash things clean in, but if she wanted to snap up a million, then it isn’t always enough to put twins out in the world and send them out on the search! And then they quarrelled until Magdalene came running home all excited, informing and confessing everything to me. Naturally I lectured her and

threatened to send her away because she had deceived us so continually and so basely; she then excused herself, saying that the children had faithfully promised her that they would tell us about the matter at the first opportunity themselves and so she was completely out of the picture. But I've investigated that quarrel at the market and I'm convinced that the twins' mother is the originator and the driving force behind the whole miserable situation. I've been silent until now because I'm ashamed of being set aside by my own children!'

'Poor Marie, you're entirely right,' her husband answered with a troubled look, 'only this fate is mine too. But still I'd like to say it's not their disposition or evil character which has driven the girls to their curious behaviour but the consciousness of the extraordinary and improper course which their stupid love affair had taken. Before I arrange to talk to them I'd only like to know of what type the intimate companionship of that charming quartet is; I don't want to hit a false note. You understand what I mean?'

'Magdalene swore that it happened in all propriety. They saw each other once a month at the most, and the girls kept the young men strictly within the limits of proper behaviour. It would take someone watching like a hawk before it would even be noticed that two pairs of lovers were together, Magdalene has, of course, escorted and watched the children more than once on their night-time excursions while we slept unsuspecting.'

'I must attend such a rendezvous unnoticed and trust that then, according to circumstances, the best thing to do would be to walk in the midst of the young ones and bring the matter to an end, or at least to send the swains home and take the girls right back with me.'

'Just so it's done!' said Mrs. Salander. 'It would please me, however, if you would take things into your hand quickly to set them straight. I'm not up to it; it pinches my heart to speak of matters which ought not to be, to daughters who are no longer children. If only our Arnold were here. I'd know indeed, what I'd do!'

'Well, what?'

'As a jolly young student, which he is, he'd have to drive away the clerks and cast the wild ideas out of his sisters!'

'But my good woman, you're not on the right track! The

purest passion, if it is serious, is unfortunately not as potent as the craziest idea. Besides, he's never coming back again as a student but as a *Doctor juris*, and I fear that he'd no longer have his earlier good humour about it.'

The opportunity of attending an amorous hour with the betrayed lovers arrived after a few days. For some time Martin Salander had required his daughters to step out of their cloister and to join in a choral group which, at regular intervals, practised great oratorios and was heard in concert with a large orchestra in one of the city churches. They had good voices and could sing rather respectably. It was barbaric, he said, to avoid such rehearsals, instead of helping to give others joy through them and of attaining for one's self the ability to hear and enjoy them with understanding in later years when one was no longer able to be active in them.

At around this same time the brothers Isidor and Julian also joined the choir.

Magdalene now informed Mrs. Salander that on tomorrow's concert rehearsal which would last until late, the Salander girls would be finished with their singing somewhat earlier and had agreed on a rendezvous with their admirers.

'Guess where they're going!' Marie said to her husband as she informed him of the news. 'You can't guess and yet they've been there often; in the large garden behind your warehouse!'

'The weather witches! How do they get in? They couldn't have pilfered the house and office key from me and let the strange lads wander all over?'

'By no means. They've found the old rusty key which opens the small back door in the garden wall, the wall which fences the large plot on the lonely side street. The girls go there first, ten minutes later the twins leave the rehearsal!'

On the day in question the daughters remained at home until evening; then they rolled their sheet music together and set out directly for the rehearsal. Somewhat embarrassed, for they were stately ladies of good upbringing and were no longer children, their father had watched them at the lunch table. Other than that they looked forward to the musical evening with some tension because of the difficult musical works being rehearsed, their father had not perceived anything out of the ordinary.

At that time the building, except for the portion he rented

for his business, was empty, and occasionally Salander had the idea of buying the old thing and remodelling it, but he always changed his mind out of modesty. In the meantime he had housed a book-keeper and the office boy there, but they lived on the other side from the garden. Unnoticed, Martin set out towards evening for his office and behind locked shutters turned on the light and thus waited until the time came for his daughters to arrive. Then he put rubbers on over his street shoes and softly crossed the moonlit court until he came to the trellis of the park-like garden. For a while he looked cautiously through the intricate ironwork; however, he neither heard a sound nor saw people moving. So he softly opened the gate and entered the garden which was planted everywhere with slender, tall trees in an outdated manner according to modern landscape architecture. Approximately in the middle of the garden stood an old crumbling sandstone fountain with dolphins and Tritons on it and with the barest trickle of water. Before the fountain stretched a spacious circle of mighty acacias, and as the trees were still without foliage, the full moon shone unhindered upon the scene as also upon the lanes which led to it. Directly behind the fountain stood a newer thicket of evergreens. Martin Salander slipped within this; it concealed him completely. He decided on this place because the fountain opposite it offered a semi-circular stone bench which was the only resting place available at this season of the year.

The time had come for the waiting father to take his place. In a few minutes he heard stealthy, quick steps very close by, and the dark forms of his daughters glided like shadows past the fountain and side by side they circled the *rondeau* two or three times without saying a word until they suddenly stopped at the trough of the fountain. Salander was unable to recognise them, they had pulled heavy veils over their faces and around their throats and chins. They drew off their gloves and filled their cupped hands with water from under the dolphin and eagerly drank it. To be sure, it was the air of a mild April night rustling in the trees, almost as mild as a night in May, but still not quite warm enough to explain the young women's thirst.

Heaven's, something must be burning that they're drinking so much! thought Martin Salander behind his conifers, but, of course, each one is carrying a St. Elmo's fire in her heart!

They again dipped out some water and cooled off their foreheads after they had first raised their veils a little.

The poor worms, the father thought again, this is a difficult situation!

Now he recognised the younger of the two, little Netti, by her voice as she spoke, distinctly but not loudly:

'Oh, Setti, I'm afraid that our luck has at last run out!'

'Why? Because of the wretched Magdalene?' answered the elder sister, not without adding an unwilling sigh, however.

'Don't blame her, she owes something to our mother, too. And it had to come out sometime and now it's here!'

'Well, it certainly is here or will come soon. Now we have to fight and carry on! Or should we cheerfully repulse and drive away these dearest men, these marvellous gifts of heaven?'

'And can you, because of disagreeing with them, separate so easily from the best parents? If only Mother could take those poor boys for good ones. But I know she doesn't, she simply doesn't!'

'She can talk because she compares everybody with Father who certainly is a model to whom no one is fit to hold a candle. And yet, perhaps, he was no less of a little rascal than our blond golden-haired darlings! And aren't they as industrious as bees before they know the cares of life? I depend upon Mother's good will which has never completely dried up and, above all, on the freer mind of our father! Recently I've read a genuinely true thought—that only a man could be human in the true sense of the word in all of the aspects of life! At least, as a woman, I feel that I can't do it. I don't want to say anything further.'

Salander was so astonished and at the same time so deeply moved by such a monstrous speech by his eldest child that he involuntarily held fast to one of the young spruces and in doing so caused a rustling in the thicket. Full of fright the sisters became quiet as mice, staring into the darkness. When nothing followed, Setti said: 'It was the wind or a bird which we woke up. Let's sit down.'

They turned towards the stone bench but they had not yet reached it when, in the background, the little door in the wall creaked. The girls stood spellbound and they saw the twins mincing along the moonlit land on tiptoe. Reaching the *rondeau*, they unhesitatingly spread out their arms towards their sweethearts but nevertheless they were pushed back.

'Stop, you men!' shouted Setti in a restrained yet firm voice, 'it was decided that on such an occasion you wear hats that are not identical so that each lady could recognise her knight! Now you come with hats that are alike as two eggs. Which one of you two is Isidor, anyway?'

'And who is Julian?' joined in Netti.

Clearly out of mischief both answered at the same time: 'I!'

'Let's see!' ordered Setti indignantly. 'Show us your little earlobes.' She went up to one of them and reached towards his right ear while Netti did the same thing with the other's left ear.

Aha! Salander said to himself, the egg noodle and the sugar roll! Again he had to control his emotions so as not to disclose his presence by loud laughter. Shouldn't I put my two masterpieces and their sweethearts on display and charge admission to see them?

In the meantime, without letting the knaves make fools of them any longer, the sisters had found out which one belonged to whom. Each received a dignified kiss and then sat down on the semi-circular bench next to his lover; whereupon a two-fold command was heard: 'No embracing or we'll go!'

At first it seemed as if each couple were carrying on its own conversation because Martin did not understand a word. He saw only that his daughters sat upright and were as motionless as statues while Isidor and Julian, leaning against their respective sweethearts, had to be content with caressing the moonlit faces of the girls with their eyes.

Mr. Salander marvelled anew at the girls; they seemed to him like two demonical creatures, embodiments of one and the same phobia of which they were obsessed. If one of the twins were to have died or otherwise to have been lost would they then perhaps be cured through the mere bisection; or would they both, in the end, hang on the remaining part, like the two mothers before Solomon and be destroyed by the spectre of their fancied passion?

He shuddered at the thought that such deranged minds could be given to such blooming maidens. And still they sat there and whispered sweet nothings to the youths who now sprang to their feet struck by some word.

Setti continued speaking alone and so loudly that she could be understood by the father hiding in the thicket:

‘Yes, you fine brothers! What hurts us has finally happened. From certain talk which your mother allowed to be heard openly in the market we must conclude that people take us sisters for rich people, or for those who soon will be rich, and consequently all love and devotion is directed towards our imagined fortune.’

The brothers drew back and stood amazed before the serious maidens; Netti, with a softer voice, also turned gloomily to her share of the twins although no longer knowing exactly whether it was the right one because of the previous shifting of position. The sisters had also risen and stepped between the confused twins who walked to and fro searching for words.

‘Yes, that’s the way it is, we’re no produce to be sold at market!’ said Netti, wiping her eyes and at the same time trying to identify Julian who had escaped recognition in the previous change of position.

The popular snatching of earlobes had become impossible because of the seriousness of the moment.

Setti found herself in the same situation, although with more presence of mind.

‘Say something, Isidor, if you’ve something to say!’ In her passionate forgetfulness she called still louder than she had desired. Pulling himself together he finally found the proper words.

‘What can we do about it if our good Mama rejoices because her sons have rich fiancées? Is that a sin? And would it even be a sin for us to know our loved ones are safe from all the cares of life—although we hope and trust to protect our wives against them with our own power? No, precious Elizabeth! I have no need to love your inheritance, but I do have need of loving you, that I swear to you! Leave money and goods, parental home and country, and forsake everything and come with me. I too don’t scorn being loved for my own sake; I also would leave behind all beautiful hopes and inheritance from my parents and go with you to the end of the world!’

He had thrown himself at the feet of the elder Miss Salander during this speech, which until then had never happened before among those four people and which also was not customary in that country. Julian did the same thing and delivered an even more ardent speech to Netti in which, however, he promised that he did not want to become poor but rather become rich in order to prove that he did not need to look upon the wealth of his bride.

They clasped the sisters' hands tightly and covered them with kisses, moved to tears by their own words. When each of the girls again grasped her own twin securely by the hand they were touched even more deeply and the very trying moment thus ended with the suitors rising up and, without resistance, embracing the pretty girls amid such violent exchange of kisses as had never happened before. One could easily see that the twins had grown tall enough to tower over the two women who were not short either.

Martin Salander also observed this as he suddenly stepped between the two pairs, and perhaps he could have stayed there longer, unnoticed, but he laid his hands, right and left, on the corresponding shoulder of a twin and said:

'Let that be enough for today, young men! And you, pretty women, be so good as to tear yourselves away from them. Your father's standing here, a superfluous individual as it seems to you.'

The four lovers jumped far apart, Setti and Netti with terrified shrieks, but Isidor and Julian had soon pulled themselves together.

'Mr. Salander, everything is quite proper; we're engaged to your daughters.'

'We're all of age, that much we know,' the young men said almost insolently; Salander noticed, however, that it was said more out of awkwardness than out of defiance.

'I'm glad of that,' he answered, 'it excuses me, to some extent, from any responsibility if some foolishness should have occurred. In the meantime I can obligingly settle that noble contest concerning the expected fortune by simply disinheriting my daughters in case they should continue their improper behaviour in disregard of their parents, and so in advance end the worries of my children as to whether or not this is a mere money match.'

The word disinherit raced through the minds of the four lovers like a gentle shock which they all felt. Without having previously given the most fleeting train of thought to it, its harsh sound brought Salander's daughters immediately to tears; the brothers Weidelich lowered their heads simultaneously, a movement scarcely visible, of course, in the moon-drenched twilight.

Nobody spoke a single word at first. Salander made use of the silence to end the scene.

'For once,' he said in a quiet voice, 'I must request in the name of both parents that these clandestine relations not be repeated in the future; it would be the best for everyone. May I accompany you young gentlemen to the back gate through which you entered so that I can take the key with me? My daughters will leave the garden with me by the usual door. Now say good-bye!'

The weeping girls prepared to obey the order; however, since they again had lost the trace of recognition during the proceedings and since the boys undecidedly, yes, even defiantly had refused to move, each girl gave her hand to the wrong twin and with a pounding heart offered him her mouth.

The brave youths did not want to consent but quickly changed places, maidens and hands, and then each embraced his own. As a result of the confusion they had become amenable and they followed Mr. Salander while Setti and Netti sank mournfully upon the stone bench.

After their father had let the twins through the gate in the wall, had turned the key twice and had pocketed it, he returned to the *rondeau*.

'Well, now we should return to your mother,' he said to the daughters. 'She's fretting at home. It's past ten o'clock!'

He preceded them into the building and into the office where a light still burned. While they recovered as best they could from the fright they had experienced Father Salander thought about the encouragement he should and wanted to give them, but the longer he thought about the maidens who were so completely mature the more difficult it was for him to interfere. Therefore he confined himself to a few meaningful crumbs which he threw at them so as to shove on to their mother the more intimate portion of the necessary reprimands.

'Is this,' he said still standing before them, 'the great curiosity that you have picked? Do you think you'll be able to boast about it? Two men whom you can't tell one from another whenever it's a little dark? Of course, you will allow them to stipulate in the marriage contract that they shall wear beards which are cut differently; for example, one of them a full beard, the other only a moustache. But think carefully; unfortunately they don't have any whiskers at all yet and perhaps they won't ever get any that would be thick enough to cut out distinguishing characteristics.'

This ridicule did not produce the desired effect; he only depressed the young women even more and they again began to cry after already having dried their eyes carefully.

'Oh, dear Father,' sobbed Setti, 'it's no use; it doesn't depend upon us. As long as they remain true to us we'll cling to them.'

'Really?'

'Yes, Father,' Netti now cried, 'how can we justify our choices other than with the steadfastness and the perseverance with which we remain loyal to the poor boys?'

There we have the stubborn obsession, thought Salander.

'As for our fiances being younger than we are,' continued the eldest daughter, choosing her words carefully, 'they do not only need wives who are full of love but who are also endowed with motherly minds and who understand how to guide them gently. Their own mother doesn't have these particular attributes which were necessary for taming those bold rascals. But we, as Netti can testify, already have won an ennobling influence upon them; they listen to us and accept what we tell them.'

Netti promptly furnished her evidence.

'It's true what Setti says, they're already more well-behaved, more well-mannered than when we came to know them.'

That's good to hear; there might be something to it, he thought, walking about—these fellows must have been rather ill-mannered. Aloud, he said: 'We won't finish with this matter today. Come on, we should be going.'

He turned out the light and led the grieving girls out into the street. The fact that he did not take them by the arm as he usually did but sighed deeply two or three times weighed more and more heavily upon their hearts the nearer they came to the house. And as they entered the room where the mother was sitting at the table knitting they felt that in spite of their years they had made a grave mistake. Still they did not attempt to flee into their bedroom but quietly sat along a wall sadly looking at the floor.

'Good evening, wife,' said Salander, 'we've caught the birds. They're asking for your forgiveness and love and they agree that for the present no further escapades will be attempted. They were more thoughtless than frivolous and certainly more frivolous than malicious.'

'That would be the last straw if they were to be more malicious than frivolous,' Marie Salander answered without looking up.

Those who were the subject of this conversation were not used to such words and had never thought that they would be involved in such a matter. Defenceless, they continued in silence.

'If you're still hungry,' the mother said, 'you can go in the kitchen; the food has been cleared away from here for a long time now. You can find your beds yourselves, you're old enough.'

They arose and went into the kitchen, took only the barest amount of light and, without eating, climbed the stairs to their bedroom. Above them on the top floor, lying in her bed quiet as a mouse, was the maid who had crept away a short time before.

Below, the distressed mother continued knitting without letting a single stitch fall.

'You really met them together?' she asked her husband.

'Yes, certainly. First the girls marched up in the brilliant moonlight, then those confounded Weidelich boys; I hid in the thicket behind the fountain, saw everything that happened and heard almost all that was spoken. First I have to tell you that aside from the secretiveness with which they had deceived us, watching from the hiding place I saw and heard nothing which would not be allowed to decent little lovers; I should assert that I didn't even see or hear anything we were allowed—as far as I can remember—if you permit me to say so. The children appeared to have a remarkable power over the louts.'

'Don't be angry with me, Martin,' Marie interrupted, 'but you're talking foolishly and illogically. The reverse is true, the louts command an unhappy power over the girls!'

'That's not so, Marie! The power which you mean also resides in the girls themselves; the boys would never possess it. It's this delusion they're suffering from. But let me tell you what happened!'

He described all the details to her as exactly and clearly as possible while she, at one time unbelievably, at another time amazed but always annoyed—looked up, shook her head and knitted again.

All of a sudden she threw the stocking on the table.

'I can't get over it! They have offended me as a mother; since the children were born I have never been accustomed, and furthermore I was not accustomed at home to speak and talk about certain subjects which ought not to be. Now I still believe that well-reared children come through the best if they see the people

in their home, namely their father and mother, conducting themselves openly and harmoniously without hearing them preach about it. And now this year-long cunning of two daughters aimed directly at their mother!'

'You can't consider the problem from this side alone; a new type of human story has come into existence. Where would these stories come from if there were not new aspects all the time? Perhaps a cheap comedy, perhaps an uplifting, serious tragedy!'

'What is the situation now? How's it to turn out?'

'As I told you, they declare they will not let go of the twins because they believe they're able to make of them what they wish and what is good! But that will put an end to the company in its existing form: I'm rather sure of that. When I let a word fall about disinheriting them I distinctly felt that the quartet became easier to manage. I had to do it because on their side the words "of age" were dropped.'

In that moment Mrs. Salander became deathly pale and grasped her left side near her heart.

'Disinherit,' she repeated in a voice full of grief. 'Could you do that because of one such affair?'

'In reality, not very easily,' Martin answered as seriously as possible, 'by relating an unusual conduct, continuous disregard and deception towards the parents, ingratitude, etc., a good lawyer could so elaborate on this matter that the judges who did not have the clearest vision would not be able to see through it.'

Marie Salander gathered her knitting together. Tears, to which she paid no attention, ran down her cheeks.

'It's already gone that far,' she said as she extinguished the lamp and seized the candlestick so as to light the way to the bedroom, 'so far that in this house such a word must be said. To lose two children.'

Martin led and supported the unsteady woman and consoled her as they walked: 'Why, just think, I'd have to be dead if the will were to be opened and contested. If I, being under the ground, were to win the suit, then you and your son Arnold could return everything to the girls.'

Isidor and Julian Weidelich, who were very subdued and stood dejectedly in the dark street behind the garden wall, agreed to return to the singing hall in order to facilitate the hiding of their

absence. When they heard that practising was still going on they sat down in a small room in which singers during the intermission refreshed themselves, and they acted as if they had been there all of the time. At the end of the rehearsal they started on their way towards the Finch where in their parents' home a small, comfortable study had been built and furnished for each.

By and by they found the proper words to speak of the event of that evening, but they could not understand much of it. For them two things particularly towered above the adventure: the reproaches of their brides before the father had come because they thought they were being loved only for their money, and Salander's threat to disinherit his daughters. Both points stood in uncanny relationship to each other. The girls did not want to be loved because of their fortune, and the father wanted to take it away from them in case they allowed themselves to be loved at all. But could that old man really disinherit the girls? As prospective notaries they already had some experience on this subject, and the paragraphs on the law of inheritance were familiar to them. The outcome of the deliberation turned out rather wisely: they discovered it might be better to submit to the commands of Mr. Salander and discontinue the rendezvous with his daughters—at any rate not to aggravate the matter. They observed that the girls also had no inclination to provoke that vague threat, and if it were to come to a break with their parents they could not live off their majority exclusively—and they feared the mother still more than they did the father.

On the other hand, they wanted to establish communication via letters and so wanted to await the time until their prospects and hopes would be crowned. They were as sure of the loyalty of both sweethearts as they were of their own, and while discussing this aspect of the question they intertwined a few useful and flowing metaphors of an effervescent nature which gave the entire discussion the most amazing quality in all the world. And yet they were perfectly in earnest: indeed, it would have been strange if such young fellows would not have been capable of grateful feelings for the loyalty of a pair of such sisters.

At home they wanted to keep the incident a secret so that their Mama would not cause new complications.

CHAPTER 9

SOMEWHERE in the Salander home the good spirit of care-free frankness seemed to be lying ill. Expecting a trying day Setti and Netti who had not slept that unhappy night had promised each other not only to withstand the judgment of the deeply wounded mother with childlike modesty but also to adhere to their chosen destiny with unchangeable devotion.

When they appeared in the sitting-room that morning no one said a word; when their father had gone away and they were alone with their mother the latter was steadfastly silent on the matter and did not offer the slightest opportunity which the daughters could have seized for confessing to her. Thus it went that entire day, the following day and all other days. In the belief that by removing it from her mind so completely that it must succeed the mother concealed the disaster within herself in a night of silence. The father also acted as if he had cleanly forgotten about it and only Magdalene whispered to them once that she may not speak about it if she did not wish to be sent away.

Arnold wrote home as usual, one time to his parents and another time to his sisters. The letters to his father and mother were passed around openly; no word in them revealed that he knew something of the grief of his mother, and what he wrote to his sisters was, as before, unsuspectingly candid.

Whenever they went out they did not observe the slightest sign of supervision; no one asked where they wanted to go and still less did anyone look after them. If they did not mention it themselves no one asked where they had been when they returned.

Therefore these stately ripe maidens did not know just how they stood, and in their transparent double secret they went around like shadows. The more a quiet understanding, a forgiving adjustment to old habits, began to settle again the more uncomfortable they felt; to the mother this all seemed as if a

single word could again spread gloom. One noon Salander was sitting alone at the table with his daughters since Frau Marie was attending the funeral of a relative who had lived in the country. From his pocket he pulled some personal letters which he had brought along from the office and examined them.

'Here's one from Arnold,' he said. 'What does he write?' and laid the opened letter on the table. Setti took the paper and read it. 'Arnold reports that he's passed the examinations for the doctor's degree tolerably well, that he's spent so and so much money, and that he now intends to make use of his permission to travel home by way of London and Paris and to set aside a year for that.'

'I'll agree to that because he's not yet accomplished in the languages spoken in those countries,' the one-time teacher said, 'for that year I won't give him so much. When he speaks of England he'll say "jury" in the English manner and when he speaks of Paris he'll say it the way the Frenchmen do; as far as his law studies are concerned, he cannot pick up any more in a half year in either place!'

In the meantime Setti had put the letter down without having finished reading it and had lifted her handkerchief up to her eyes. After having picked up the letter and having looked at it, Netti immediately did the same thing.

'What's going on? What's the matter with you two?' the father asked, struck with surprise, 'why don't you read through to the end?'

He picked up the letter, looked for the place where they had stopped and read aloud: 'Now I send my love to my charming sisters. In order to lead the precious double concept to my heart, I have pushed together the smaller halves of the names Setti and Netti, and think only "Snetti"! And so they stand before me. But how are things going for them? Isn't there any engagement in the air yet? By this time they're no longer "spring chickens"; as far as I'm concerned it's all right with me if I find them still at home, for who knows what kind of brothers-in-law such fastidious nuns will select for me!'

'Well, well!' the father grumbled good-naturedly, 'if I had known what was inside the letter would have stayed in my pocket. But put those eye towels away and eat your soup.'

His manner of speaking consoled the girls a little for it was

the friendliest that they had heard in the entire time, and so with their father they ate to the very end of the meal.

When the maid did not have anything further to do in the room and Martin, at his leisure, had drained his wine glass, and while the ladies, after the existing habit of the house, still remained seated, Martin again began to speak in a genial voice.

'Since through Arnold's harmless jesting that disagreeable situation that bewitches all of us is alluded to briefly, in a rational manner we ought to speak further on that subject. You consider yourselves very respectable; we, your mother and I, believe that you truly have avoided having any connections with the young men. On the other hand, we don't know what will happen in the future and whether you're more clear on that matter yourselves. We think that, perhaps you'll gradually find yourselves again—and certainly without the two satellites. The other day our errand boy came from the post office and said that he had seen you two at the delivery window. "Did they take letters home?" I asked, and he said: "No, they received some letters which were there for them." "Good, I know what it is," I answered. Do you send letters to them *poste restante*?'

'Yes!' both daughters answered simultaneously.

'And in what spirit? Of hopeful faith? Or do you resign yourselves to mere friendship? You can see that I know how to express myself in the style which obviously prevails in the correspondence.'

'As long as they're certain of two hearts that will not require them to, our friends will not renounce us!'

Netti had said this and Setti added:

'How could we deliberately ever want to relinquish hope, to lose those beloved persons, exchanging them, for the rest of our lives, for a mocking gossip!'

'You play your cards well!' replied the father, with inner sadness thinking about his wife who with just as deeply-rooted opposite convictions in that same moment was sitting down at the table in a distant house of mourning trying to enjoy the meal which followed the funeral.

'Dear children,' he continued after a short silence, 'how long do you really expect to wait for your imagined luck? If I only knew! Yes, if, like your sweethearts, you were twenty years old instead of being older than they, then I'd listen to the idea!'

'Always the same thing!' the daughters exclaimed in confusion; 'have patience! In a few years we'll all appear to be the same age—they as old as we, and we as young as they—just wait until we're married! They'll be men! Besides, they'll receive their deserved positions faster than many believe, and then this misery will be at an end.'

'Trump!' the father called out laughingly, but full of amazement over the speeches of his daughters; 'all this sounds like something out of the heroic age when men and women remained eternally young. We want to wait for that, and may you not live to see a time when it goes according to your wishes and you will really need heroic powers. And now we ought to break up this session. This evening I have to go to a meeting concerning the coming election and I cannot stay away. It would be kind of you if you were to go to the station in my place and fetch your mother. I know that it would do her good if she were to meet you unexpectedly.'

The daughters promised to do that and, out of secret joy, lightly blushed over the errand they were given.

Martin Salander went to his office, attended to business a few hours and then spent a goodly time over the election details, going over letters and other papers and jotting down this or that. It was a question of determining a list of nominees for the district elections to the cantonal council of Münsterburg, the checking on the incumbent office holder, the replacement of resigning ones and the admission of new members. Salander, in spite of his services which were required very frequently and the manifold demands placed upon him, always rejoiced in his independence from all election troubles—as far as his own person was concerned—by keeping aloof from everything connected with offices and titles.

His innermost mind told him that he, like so many others, as a council member could stand and speak for many things, and yet it meant nothing if in open meetings or in clubs his opinion prevailed against an opponent who was a member of the legislative body and who there alone had the final say.

But he could not bring himself to offer his services, that is, to confide to the other leaders that he felt the desire to be elected which, after all, was the custom. And in order not to arouse that appearance he participated in the leadership of today's meeting

while those who wanted to be nominated or who knew that it would happen stayed away; to be sure, not all of them did so for some candidly appeared and sat down.

In the Hall of the Four Winds, which served the various factions and societies as a meeting place, Salander found tightly knit groups and individual *Burghers* seated at two long tables, and just as many men were standing against the walls talking to each other. Among these circulated the functionaries, here and there going into conferences or belabouring a rebellious pot-house politician. Martin joined them. He was the main author of the idea to reconcile both main parties; he himself belonged to the Democrats whose grasp over the people had been weakening for some time now and so he thought it a good idea and a fair one to favour the Old Liberals with more leeway. He especially had become a worshipper of the newest whim advancing the idea that minorities should be given greater representation. To this notion adhered not only political philosophers but also all kinds of practical people to whom that beautiful maxim may become useful one of these days. Up to now they would not even have admitted the slightest degree of difference of opinion nor did they intend doing so in the future.

Since the tables were gradually being filled the chairman gave the signal to begin. Salander, striding through those who were still moving to the front, met with a young man with whom he seemed to be acquainted and who, by lifting his hat, extended him a reverent greeting which he returned politely. He had to go along the side of one of the tables in order to find his place at the head-end beneath the officials. On the way he again met the young man who repeated the same courtesy and pulled off his hat, this time making a bow. Why does that fellow insist on putting his hat back on after he has taken it off? Just then the scales fell from his eyes: those were the twins! Why, they showed an honest interest in government; that's in their favour and shows evidence of serious minds! If they don't act worse than that they're not such bad boys.

With these thoughts and with the recollections of his midday conversation with his daughters he half absent-mindedly took his seat and ordered a little glass of wine which, because of respectability, propriety in this region of the hall demanded be drunk very slowly, almost unnoticeably.

The discussion began with a political speech by the presiding officer, the election of the vote counters and other functionaries and then began the passing of proposals. Several printed slips of paper which were explained orally by the appointed reporters were the basis of the discussion and five or six uncontested candidates were soon dealt with. But with the seventh candidate, and when the president had asked the question whether an additional nomination would be made, a strong voice resounded from the background, shouting:

'I nominate Mr. Martin Salander, a merchant in Münsterburg.'

And from one of the other corners of the hall another voice cried just as loudly:

'I second the motion.'

'Ah! Good! It's been deserved for a long time!' was murmured at the tables, and everyone turned around to look for the two men.

The president, however, tapped his glass and when it had become quiet he spoke:

'I'd like to ask this assembly whether we're already beginning with the new nominations or first of all settling the forthcoming proposals which probably will be settled quickly and unanimously.'

'I persist in my nomination' the first voice shouted, and then a loud 'seconded!' followed immediately afterward from the other corner. The president announced:

'It is proposed that Mr. Martin Salander be accepted as the seventh member on our ballot for the Large Assembly of the Council. I'll ask the person who made the motion please to identify himself.'

'Substitute notary, Isidor Weidelich!' resounded still louder from the back, and from the seconding corner the other one 'shouted: obviously it was brother Julian:

'Bravo! Bravo!'

Everyone turned around again.

'What Weidelich is that? Which one is it? That young man over there?'

The president tapped his glass again and said:

'Those who favour that the nomination made by Mr. Isidor Weidelich be accepted, raise their hands!'

'Up!' a number of young people cried, waving their hands in the air, and rather hesitatingly one hand after another followed

them; when they stopped the chairman attempted to count them. There were fifty-six hands.

'It appears to be a majority! All those opposed to the nomination——'

Two or three raised their hands but let them fall again when they saw that they were the only ones.

'Then it's decided to vote immediately on the proposed nomination of Mr. Martin Salander. Those who are agreed that his name be placed in the seventh place on the ballot and in the name of the present assembly be recommended to the people for election, raise their hands!'

With the exception of a few gaps which were almost unnoticeable all hands were raised with an assenting bustle which proved that Salander's election seemed to be desired by the citizens who were present.

Salander, who was as good as elected, found himself in a state of peevish agitation. Despite his secret desire to occupy the seat in the council which was due to him, he saw that through their bold and premature interference he felt obliged to the twins; at the same time he saw the voting delayed by the impolite fussiness of the chairman, a coincidence which could be but only unwelcome to him. Considering that he may not accept the candidacy under such conditions and be obligated to the twins for the council seat, in his absent-mindedness he had missed the decisive moment of protest and was so uneasy and abashed that he almost emptied his previously untouched glass of wine in a few sips. Then, with a certain solemnity the chairman confirmed the results and wanted to continue with his business. Not until now did Martin Salander get to his feet and demand to be recognised. He thanked everyone for the honoured trust but he declared that they must remove his name on principles which he could not explain here; and he asked, with no uncertain words, that a new vote be taken. Two older men urged him to reconsider. In his heart he was truly grateful; however, he remained firm in his resolve. The meeting continued with the customary incidents until it was adjourned.

The chairman, who like Salander had secret desires, was elected on Martin's motion; the latter, thereby, quietly fulfilled his duty as a citizen because he knew the chairman to be a capable man.

On the way home he had to subdue very conflicting emotions. One, because he could not accept it from the hands of those who had presented it to him as if it had been shaken out of their sleeves; two, he had to give up an office which, as he believed, was necessary to his future activities. What would Frau Marie have said if it were reported that the Weidelichs had nominated him publicly! And still, as much as he was annoyed over the rascals as he called them, he reluctantly perceived a glimmer of well-meaning for them and for the unsuccessful trick they had played on him. Then for the first time, he felt ashamed of himself for stepping over the threshold of the council building after several years of activity, for having blundered into such a petty snare and for confessing to himself that he lacked the coarse recklessness indispensable to the lively pursuit of a political career.

After he had considered the consequences and the further demands once the path of official life was begun he was satisfied finally with what he had done. No, he said, the knowledge that I was being supported by the two striplings would follow me everywhere, and certainly they would have, in a very uncomfortable manner, attached themselves to my feet. And what did not take place today can happen more favourably in a luckier hour!

When he told his wife of the experience and she praised him highly for it, he reaped the finest reward for his conduct. At home, he had found her in a more contented and in a happier mood because she felt that since the daughters had come to meet her it was the beginning of a happier time. Therefore she had passed that evening in friendly understanding with them which the girls, as they went to bed, interpreted in their favour.

Julian and Isidor, the authors of all this confusion of the heart, stuck their heads together in one of the beerhalls of the city after the meeting.

'That went off pretty badly with our intended father-in-law,' one of them said.

'As far as the old man of our sweethearts is concerned I believe that on occasion he'll attribute it to our good will, and surely, he didn't take it the wrong way,' answered the other, 'but otherwise our debut has completely succeeded; he's as good as elected.'

'Certainly. Who would have thought that we two, the very

first time we went to a political meeting would make a councillor?’

‘I’ll say that’s a good start! *Prosit!* We’ll have to keep that up! If we have such success in dabbling in politics it could be very useful to us in the future. My boss says he wants to retire sometime this year; I have to do almost everything already.’

‘And very likely mine won’t be elected anymore when his term of office runs out.’

‘Then you can pave the way in your district right now. Finish up what’s in your glass!’

‘In answer to your first statement, listen to what I thought up recently; I’d like to give it careful consideration.’

‘Out with it!’

‘I figure that it would be to our advantage if we didn’t join the same party, then we could work to our mutual advantage. It frequently happens in families that one of the brothers is grey, the other black, the third red, and all get along fine; one makes friends for the others by speaking of them with love and by recommending them.’

‘That’s obvious! The more I think of it the truer it is. You hound of God! But how shall we share that morsel? Have you a definite preference? A principle?’

‘I? Not yet! That we’ll get later with experience, if it’s essential. But for now it’s all the same to me which song I sing; one doesn’t really have to chatter all the time if no attention is paid to what is being said.’

‘I’ll buy a quart of beer.’

‘*Prosit!*’

‘Exactly! Only there’s a fly in the ointment; the gay or less jolly sound of the names. Now the Democrats are on top and are supposed to be smart; the Old Liberals are already being called pigtails* by them. Conservatives would be more agreeable to the ears, but the simpletons don’t need that phrase.’

‘There’s something to that! Already the word “Old Liberal” stands for a sleepy and stupid fellow.’

‘And still, on the other side, the concept of “Democrat” begins to smell! And a notary has, above all, to deal with capital.’

‘Certainly, but you forget that the mortgaged farmers, debtors and bankrupts, poor people of all kinds have business with

* A symbol of old-fashioned ways.

notaries; that you don't have to be told. And these are in the majority in the election of notaries as in anything else.'

'True again. Now listen, since the advantages and disadvantages oppose each other so equally, I'll propose to shoot dice with you for the parties.'

'Waitress, the dice box!'

When the dice came, Julian seized and shook it.

'What should we bet: I think we'll exclude all secondary parties and play only for the main ones.'

'Then Democrats or Old Liberals. One throw is enough; whoever throws the highest score gets what was decided on beforehand, the other one takes the remaining name.'

'Then we'll say the winner becomes a Democrat, the loser, an Old Liberal. Do you agree?'

'Indeed I do,' answered the first.

'Drink the rest, *a tempo prosit!*'

'Come on! *Prosit!*'

Julian shook the dice once more and dumped the box onto the table. He shook three sixes.

'It's over already!' Isidor cried.

'No, you throw too, you can throw just as high and then we'll play off the tie!' brother Julian said.

The other shook but threw only a thirteen.

'*Prosit!* Here's to you, Mr. Democrat!' he shouted and the other, Julian, said:

'*Prosit!* And to you, Mr. Old Liberal, *vulgo* Mr. Pigtails!'

CHAPTER 10

ALTHOUGH THE BROTHERS were in perfect agreement, in the eyes of the world they had parted inasmuch as the twins moved among the circles corresponding to each one's political party. Since they possessed but little political understanding and only a small stock pile of ideas it did not seem difficult to make themselves more noticeable through their presence than through speeches and in return to acquire the good will of those speakers to whom they had dedicated flattering attention. By and by they proved their usefulness in doing unimportant clerical work which they did willingly, and in furnishing confidential information from the camp of the opposite party—propositions and resolutions, amusing or derogatory incidents, personal clashes and the like—which they promptly whispered to each other. Whenever they got rid of the news, discreetly and in an altogether off-handed way, it gave them among their own party the reputation of being active and well-informed. Besides, it is to be assumed that these characteristic activities originated not so much in malicious deceit as out of frivolous play, with which the work and methods of political parties is carried out. Diligently they practised still other harmless tricks. Whenever they went to an open meeting, a club or only an inn, they saw to it now and then that urgent business letters and telegrams were sent to them from their offices or that they would be paged. To be sure, experienced petty climbers smiled at that but with respect and goodwill. They took it as something thoroughly clever, quasistatesmanlike, and did not in any manner reveal to the masses the secret which was known to them.

The brothers thrived and prospered in the best possible way, each in his own place, and their esteem and popularity among the people increased daily. Of course, their definite hopes of receiving their two superiors' appointments did not come to pass. The one who wanted to retire suddenly became jealous and thought differently; the other one who was to be thrown out of office after the expiration of his term made desperate efforts and per-

sonally presented his compliments at the houses of the authorised voters so that with a bare majority he was again returned to office. His substitute, Julian, who candidly solicited votes, received so many that through their number he obtained a claim to be put on the ballot among the outstanding candidates.

Under such circumstances the two young men did not hesitate any longer in looking about beyond their notary offices and in making use of acquired friendships; it was not long until each was chosen to be the notary in a fruitful, well-to-do region of the country. Isidor, the Old Liberal, in the north; and Julian, the Democrat, to the east of Münsterburg.

Joy prevailed at the Finch. Mrs. Amalie Weidelich shouted: 'Two notaries* for sons!' and Father Jacob said: 'Yes, as far as honour is concerned you've got just what you wanted; but the income of a notary is nothing to shout about. We'll have to sacrifice even more.'

'Oh, don't trouble yourself about that!' the mother answered, growing angry, 'their kind doesn't stay in one place very long.'

'In any case,' Jacob Weidelich continued, unperturbed, 'each one needs a house immediately, a suitable dwelling, for as clerks they can't room with farmers. That will cost money too.'

The sons calmed their father. To obtain a nice house or even a country estate would be an easy matter because of very advantageous opportunities which always arise. In their business there were occasional auctions caused by bankruptcy or the selling of inheritances or other cases of change of ownership. If a clever notary only would keep his eyes open and would want to risk something he could, of course, be first in line.

Father Weidelich did not understand such business matters correctly; he had not heard of such practices from the old clerks of his memories, yet he was not one who hated profits and finally he would find it much better if the biblical word could be applied here: 'The ox who threshes shouldn't have his mouth tied.'

The mother did not have the capacity to say one word more, she was so contented—almost struck with surprise at seeing her sons sitting in separate manor houses, living far apart from each other.

While for the present the young notaries took possession of and

* In this sense clerks to the petty sessions of the legislature.

managed the offices in their predecessors' living rooms; as occasion offered each one searched for a house in the towns and villages of his district. That gave them the opportunity to show themselves to the native population and to exchange pleasantries with them. In order not to be mistaken in their present career they also had made their exteriors as dissimilar as possible; Julian had his hair cut short and had planted a fragile moustache; Isidor had parted and combed his hair sleekly with pomade; the former wore a black felt hat wide as a wagon wheel; the latter a little hat like a soup plate.

As luck would have it, in a short time both found the opportunity to get for themselves a fine piece of ground at a cheap price, and in the land-deed books they merely registered their own names in the spaces of the former owners. Later they could sell so many smaller plots from it that they could live almost rent free. Julian's seat was in the east in the large village of Lindenberg. The widely scattered houses surrounded the base of the mountain; the new white office above however, could be seen glistening from the surrounding countryside. Isidor had chosen the parish of Unterlaub as his residence and the small but neat manor which he occupied likewise was situated on a pleasant knoll surrounded by green towering beeches, a spot called 'Lautenspiel' or 'Lute Song'. At a certain season of the year and in the evening during nice weather whenever the elder Weidelichs climbed the heights above the Finch, they could see in the distance the white walls and the windows of both houses shimmering and sparkling in the light of the setting sun.

Not only the light of heaven but also the favour of man seemed to bless the very happy homes and their owners; then, as a little time slipped away, an old member of the Cantonal Council in Isidor's district died and in Julian's region another one was obliged to retire.

The Old Liberals, grieving over the loss of their colleague, wanted to try it out with younger wood and selected the youthful notary as their leader; the Democrats in the east fetched Julian down from the Lindenberg if only because of his large hat, for this hat, as an unconcealed token of political view, formed a first-rate contrast to Isidor's parted hair and smooth face, and especially was a challenge to all others of different political affiliations.

They were called upon at the next council of two hundred, and after the election was approved they were led into the hall to be sworn in; before the session, under the guidance of the sergeants-at-arms, they already had found their predecessors' seats and after a short ceremony they took them.

As they now sat quietly, the one here, the other there, both were so inattentive that they scarcely knew what was being discussed at the present time. By and by it dawned upon them that they had brought printed matter in an envelope. New bills were being passed out and they paged through them attentively, also catching the thread around which the deliberation of a draft of a bill had spun. At the first ballot which took place during the course of the morning they were already absent since they had followed their acquaintances who had waved to them and with whom they had run away to breakfast at an inn. Because not everyone was there it could not really be voted through and the sergeants-at-arms had to be sent out to get the absentees from the nearby taverns while the more serious and persevering portion of the senators sat in the council chambers listening to some report. In the darkness of noise-filled tap rooms which were well-known to them, the sergeants-at-arms placed themselves in the doorways and in loud authoritative voices requested that the highly-esteemed gentlemen come to the voting. In a tumult the eager breakfasters got up, the twins among them, and in a thick cloud came streaming through the ancient door.

Isidor and Julian found the incident amusing and came in with laughing faces, while on the high bench the vexed president said to the vice-president next to him: 'That's about what it was like in school whenever the teacher pushed the boys in the door.'

They proceeded with the drafting of the bill but it just did not 'click'; therefore, the president proposed a recess and an afternoon session. That pleased the assembly and the youngest members thought up a new entertainment. In a group of colleagues of like disposition each wandered into the restaurant for dinner. There they became extremely lively, acquiring the halo of equality with card playing and black coffee.

When after two hours they returned to the council chambers they already felt as though they were at home. On this first day they began to imitate the formal routines of older, regular mem-

bers and of very busy men. Julian abandoned his seat in order to sit at a table covered with papers which stood in the middle of the hall. Not paying any attention to a supply of small slips of paper Julian removed a large sheet of the finest paper from a ream, smoothed it out in order to show his office skill and, instead of using a paper knife, tore it apart by hand with one pull, straight as a line, of course.

'Brrrr!' cried the president to his neighbour whose ears ached from the shrill noise, 'I'd never want to make this spendthrift Minister of Finance. Look how he uses that expensive paper which doesn't cost him anything.'

But Julian continued to tear the pieces until he found an appropriate one upon which to write. He dipped his pen, looked up to the ceiling thoughtfully and then began to write something, now and then stopping a short time in order not to miss a single word of the proceedings. At last he turned his chair towards the speaker, leaned back, crossed his legs one over the other and, pen behind his ear, appeared to listen attentively, almost intently. Then he wrote more, finally sprinkled sand over what he had written and then re-read it, folded it together and walked back to his seat.

Soon afterward Isidor went to the table where he took a little sheet of letter paper and with a flowing hand wrote a letter. The signature, however, he executed slowly and emphatically until suddenly he made a circular motion with his fist, which played in the air a little while before he let it settle on the paper, and then scrawled a swarm of curly interlocking circular penstrokes on and around his name. Finally, to the edification of the people who watched him from the gallery above, he squirted three dexterous dots among these curlicues. Then he folded the letter, put it in an envelope, addressed it, stuck up his pen-holder and winked at the sergeant who stood attentively at his post. Eager to serve he hurried over on his tiptoes his silver shield hanging on three small chains before his breast, took the letter and laid it under a piece of sealing wax on the seal-press which was on the table, pressing on it the little coat of arms, and then he carried it out, or rather passed it through a little door used as a peep-hole in the heavy oak door, to one of the messengers standing outside. Isidor, meanwhile, with folded arms relaxed, sat in his seat at the table observing the public in the gallery.

The chairman said to his neighbour: 'I'll bet that he's ordered a half-dozen frankfurters to take along home this evening.'

'In his letter he could have asked for around a half million francs for his constituents,' the vice-president answered, laughing. 'By the way, you don't seem to feel very affectionate towards our newest acquisitions.'

'Well, that depends. If, twin-wise, they appear and begin to behave as if it were *mardi gras* time or some other boy's sport then I must confess—may I ask you to present your amendment to me in writing?' the president interrupted himself as a speaker concluded his proposition and sat down; 'who else wants the floor?'

This afternoon session lasted so long that immediately after adjournment the high officials had to go to the railway station in order to leave for their homes. Since the little country was interwoven with railway lines it was not considered proper anymore to spend the night in the capital when in a half hour, or in one hour, one could be at home, and in the morning could return just as rapidly.

In order not to cause offence the brothers Weidelich found it necessary to travel back to their respective districts with their colleagues. It was proper, moreover, at the end of the day to take part in the conversation of the homeward bound legislators, if only with one's ears, and so as it were, to some extent, attend until the very end.

On this very same evening in the Finch the parents of the important councillors sat morosely, almost grieving at their table. Proud because of the present events, which justified all their sacrifices and hopes, all that day they had awaited the moment when their sons would find the time to come and visit their father and mother. Already at noontime they had hearty food and better-than-usual drink ready and, to no avail, had tarried until they finally began to eat. Afterwards they left their tasks frequently and walked out into the road in the hope of seeing the new dignitaries coming up from the nearby city. But they did not come.

'They won't find the time,' Jacob Weidelich said, 'now they're quite tied down on all sides with business.'

Late in the evening when the good people went out once more and in the stillness heard the last train rumbling and whistling in the distance, they knew that they would not see their sons

any more that day. The wife wiped her eyes, which she had from time immemorial only done when she peeled onions; to her it felt as if her sons had vanished for ever and were gone to an unknown land.

'They're coming again tomorrow,' said Jacob, 'and probably the day after too.'

'Who knows whether they'll think of us then. In my heart I feel as if they've nothing more to do with us.'

The woman crept back into the house so that no one would observe her sorrow and divine its cause, and after a few minutes the husband also squeezed back in. Together they drank of that 'better' wine which they had held ready especially for their sons.

'And why then do they have to travel back and forth like jackasses?' cried the mother, 'they could stay overnight here comfortably with us and wouldn't have to spend any money.'

'You don't understand! They have to look in at their own offices and see what's happened, and early tomorrow before they go away they give their clerks the work for the day. That's better than if they don't appear for three or four days. What do we have all these railways for, for which the communities and the state have gone into such debt? Now it's to their benefit; during the day they can sit magnificently here in the council chambers and in the evening and in the morning still work a few hours at home. Why, they have a great responsibility!'

In Martin Salander's house, too, that day did not pass by without leaving strange traces behind. As the family sat together at the midday meal, Martin pulled out a newspaper that had been issued around eleven o'clock. He felt strangely taken un-awares. The unwelcome sweethearts of his daughters had not only appeared as his patrons and were almost at the point of helping him to the highest council but they themselves sat on it while he, the father, the true and experienced friend of the people, had to read in the papers what transpired there. A human but still uncomfortable jealousy darkened his soul.

'What is in the paper that gives you such a serious expression on your face?' asked Frau Marie, who looked at him because his daughters seemed to be watching him furtively.

'I——' he said, keeping his eyes on the page, 'it's nothing!'

I just read here that the Weidelich sons have been made Town Councillors.'

Not until now did he look up; his wife jumped as if she were frightened. Both noticed that the eyes of the girls shone strangely and that their lips moved as if they wanted to say: are they old enough now?

'The soup is too salty, Magdalene, take my bowl away!' the mother called to the cook. The latter took the bowl together with the spoon and tasted the soup.

'I don't understand,' she replied, 'I certainly didn't use any more salt than usual.'

'Just the same, it's too salty! I really don't want to eat.' With that Mrs. Salander put her napkin away and stood up.

'Marie, eat and don't be silly! Or don't you feel well?' Martin asked as he now saw that his wife had turned pale. Worried, he stood up, and the daughters, with completely changed expressions on their faces, also pushed their chairs back in order to hurry to their mother's aid. However, she suddenly recovered. 'Just remain seated and eat!' she said, 'I'll eat too as well as I can.'

After they had again taken their places and the excited woman had become somewhat calmed, she resumed speaking:

'I see that you haven't yielded from your inclinations and have allowed things to take their course. If you have something to say then speak plainly. I won't interfere anymore and, by word and deed, leave to your father whatever is to be done.'

'Don't talk that way!' Martin said, 'we don't want to stand before our children like a divorced couple. What's the present situation,' he turned to his daughters, 'what's happening with those young men, the twins?'

For a little while there was silence. Then Miss Setti collected herself. 'Dear parents!' she said with lowered eyes while, with pounding heart, Netti sat next to her, 'the time has come. Next Sunday they want to come and ask for our hands. We beg you not to oppose us!'

Again a short silence reigned. Then Salander said: 'We want them to come. Until then your parents can certainly think about it a little and also ask for the customary time for reflection, insofar as it seems to be desirable.'

'Oh, we don't want to do anything hasty!' Netti cried.

'That's fine, now eat, everything will get cold!' concluded Salander who alone resumed the meal as the girls tarried and the mother had risen again and silently busied herself in the room.

After that hour the daughters displayed submission and amiability towards their father and mother. If they were determined to assert personal claims they knew also how to value correctly the differences between a happy separation from their parents' home and a violent rupture. By limiting the exchange of letters to the minimum, to which their sweethearts did not wish to agree, they had restored their good conscience. To make up for the fewer letters they now and then climbed, in beautiful morning or evening hours, to the mountain heights where they could see that house of the notary in the Lautenspiel and that house of the notary on the Lindenberg. On slender thongs each carried a pair of binoculars which made the distant objects of their choice of love even a thousand times more beautiful, and when they arrived at the top, with darting eyes they looked out into the distant blue. Netti, through her glasses, was able to count the windows of Julian's house; her sister did not succeed because at that time Isidor's house stood in the shadows. Instead she saw white smoke ascending and through the trees a streak of sunlight flashing on a fishpond in the Lautenspiel.

'How wonderful it will be,' she cried, 'when I can date my letters to you: 'Lautenspiel, May 1st''.

"'At Lindenberg, June 1st,' wouldn't look bad either!' said Netti and she peered further; 'if you come to visit me we'll eat in the upper corner room; look, the window farthest to the left, we should have a beautiful view from there. He wrote that it's supposed to be a most charming little hall.'

With even greater yearning than they had looked out into the land, they now looked forward to the coming Sunday, so that the day did not come as suddenly upon them as it did for their parents.

From conversations with Martin, Mrs. Salander had in the meantime painfully convinced herself that no tangible grounds for further opposition were to be found and that the marriage would be only all the more shocking to the world if the daughters simply were to elope. But she could not bring herself to be present during the visit of the twins and like a sacrificial lamb witness the triumph of her two sly daughters; therefore, she decided to

utilise that day by making a long-promised visit to the country and, through her absence, at the same time in a small way punish, according to her opinion, her wantonly erring children. She would have to serve dinner to the suitors, however, since she had given in to her husband, so she herself saw to it that, within the proper limits, there would be a decent meal; no one was happier to help along than Magdalene who hoped by the happy ending to be completely forgiven for her sins. She served in that house gladly and hoped never to have to leave it.

On Sunday morning when the wagon stood before the house waiting for the mother, Marie spoke to her husband and daughters and expressed the hope that come what may they would abstain from an engagement party. It would have no significance anyway since, on the basis of their being of age, they were engaged without the assistance of the parents.

The two maidens in their happiness gladly renounced the festivities which the mother herself had interpreted as being superfluous; what is more, they were happy that she was going away for the day because they knew how the twins shied away from her, and the business of that day thus would be more easily wound up.

Martin Salander, on the other hand, almost with regret saw his wife drive away, perplexed by her unyielding bitterness in the matter; he knew how honest and free from all hate she was and therefore felt a heavy presentiment of misfortune from her behaviour, which he was not able to share but still had to respect.

Not long after Mrs. Salander had gone, the brothers, Julian and Isidor, appeared, both attired as if they were going to some celebration. Entering the room with them was a bright sunbeam. Salander was almost blinded by the faces of his daughters who did not even laugh yet beamed so from happiness that he wished that their mother could also have seen the remarkable phenomenon.

As is done in proper families, the girls sat on the sofa in the drawing-room and the father and the young suitors on chairs; the latter were so embarrassed that it seemed as if they were suffering from good innate modesty. This was caused by the absence of the girls' mother. They had left their canes standing in front of the door, as the country people do whenever they come to the

government offices; they held their hats in their hands and during the first exchange of conversations they looked around the room, embarrassed.

Finally, Salander brought them to the purpose of their visit; it pleased him that such forward, youthful politicians could, at first glance, be still so modest and even bashful. But of course, there was nothing more to say after all that had happened, and what they did say they said briefly and naturally; the Honourable President of the Cantonal Council would have found nothing to censure therein. Again they gazed around the walls while Salander hastily contemplated his answer: the well-kept room heightened their unaccustomed respect and this, in turn, added to the good opinion of them which Salander held; he avoided each deliberation, each idea over this or that point, all questions about their plans for the future and their prospects; he explained with a serious expression, to be sure, that he and the girls' mother were not opposed to the wishes of their daughters and could live only in the hope that this marriage would, etc., etc. Then he cut off suddenly and invited them in to dinner, if they did not have anything else in mind.

They were still so embarrassed that they did not once venture, in the manner of bridegrooms, to get close to the young women whom they knew so well. The latter, changing from solemn dignity to embarrassment almost made them angry, for they themselves did not know how distinguished they suddenly seemed to the twins. Observing such tenderness with new satisfaction the father left for a short time to go to his office and open the incoming mail, purposely leaving the betrothed couples to themselves.

At the midday meal the notaries became more talkative though not enough to add zest to the conversation. Salander wanted to talk about politics and council matters; they, however, did not seem to be so disposed and most of the time they allowed him to speak alone, which he again interpreted as modesty. He then thought that the elder Weidelichs, who lived close by, must also be met half-way and that a start could best be made if he would tell his daughters to walk to the Finch with the young men and present themselves to their future parents-in-law. By this means Mrs. Marie Salander would be spared the first step; he himself wanted to surprise her on her return journey, to meet the hired wagon and to wander for a few hours away from the city.

His proposition was approved enthusiastically by everyone; by his daughters because they counted on such a rewarding walk, and by the twins because they had a guilty conscience and hoped to appease their parents. The three days at the beginning of that past week when the council was in session had, of course, gone by without the young men finding a single opportunity to visit their yearning, expectant parents who did not know what they should believe—sometimes consoling themselves with the importance of the business and the personality of their sons, sometimes doubting their hearts and their children's love and probably mistaken in both. They also did not know anything about what was happening on this beautiful Sunday. So that a shameful scene would not, perchance, take place at the market because of motherly talk, the twins had kept silent on their intentions.

Jacob Weidelich and his wife, Amalie, were sitting on the bench before their house making plans for the future when they saw two black-clad young men with high hats on their heads; on an arm of each one was a pretty, blooming, freshly-primped young lady. The Salander girls had intended to please and also to honour the other parents and their sons a little since, after all, their own parents did not raise any special cheers or triumphant cries. Thus they wanted to participate in it.

Mr. and Mrs. Weidelich thought first of Death rather than of their sons—until they were all the way there.

The finally recognised their offsprings, so rosily inspired as never before in their lives by good wine and still better adventure; but when the two girls were introduced as Salander's and as their sons' fiancées, they forgot, especially the mother, all their sorrows faster than a light is blown out—it was, at least, almost that dark before her eyes. The Salander girls of whom each piece should be worth half a million francs! That is, if their father did not commit some foolishness again. For nowadays who can count upon a million francs! That is just the way it is, they have the fiancées and are men enough with or without a half million!

Such thoughts as these raged in the breast of the woman but did not become known, however, since she had run into the house immediately and had cleaned herself up as quickly as possible. During that time the honest milk and vegetable dealer had

led his esteemed visitors into the rustic room, indicating to the young people that they should take a seat around the table, and then hurried away with the empty wine jug so as not to have to make conversation immediately.

While he was gone, the mother came running and said: 'That's right, just rest!' and then again ran out of the other door in order, as she put it, to hunt up the servant so that she could help her bake some little cakes, only one pan full, and make some coffee. Vainly the young people followed her and told her that she should not bother since they had neither hunger nor thirst. That did not matter to her, she replied, as the day was far from being over and nothing was ready yet, and then she marched off again. She collided with her husband who was walking sedately with the filled pewter jugs and a large piece of cheese on a hand-painted platter; he put it down on the table, covered the latter with glasses and then, instead of staying in the room, went out again after a while coming back with a gigantic bowl of ham pieces. He took a smaller plate also decorated with gaily-coloured carnations, and knives and forks from the cupboard, and at the last produced a large loaf of black bread which he sliced. In between one already heard the fire crackling in the kitchen and the butter sputtering in the pan.

'Why, what are you doing, Father?' shouted Mrs. Weidelich entering, wearing a white kitchen apron and with a very red face. 'That would have been better after the coffee. Where should I put the things I'm baking?'

'Just bring whatever you have when you're finished,' Jacob Weidelich said calmly, 'we'll push everything together, then our poverty will seem so much richer. Besides, the boys and I would rather drink a glass of wine than coffee.'

'The boys, yes! Do you prodigal councilmen know that this fine ham was already boiled for you last week? But you didn't show yourselves for even a little minute and you let us wait in vain for you.'

'You shouldn't take it so hard, Mama,' the sons apologised, 'we belong to our position, not to ourselves any more; business and circumstances occupied us so much this first time we couldn't get away before we went home. We hope that in the future it'll be better.'

'See to it!' the mother said, 'My God, but baking gives me a

heathenish thirst! Give me a half a glass of wine, Father, and pour the young company some too as long as it's here.'

Weidelich poured a clear, half-red wine into the glasses.

'To your health, dear maidens! To your health, Father! And yours, Isidor and Julian!'

She emptied the glass with one swallow and wiped off her mouth with her apron; visibly refreshed she continued speaking:

'And what are your dear parents doing, girls? Is your Mama well, and your Papa, too?'

'Father and Mother are both well, thank you,' said Setti. 'They send you and Mr. Weidelich their best regards and they hope soon to have the opportunity of greeting the esteemed parents of our bridegrooms themselves.'

'As the father it's now time for you also to say a little something,' the happy woman nudged her husband who was, to be sure, only half informed of the engagement details but who still knew how to judge the situation; he cleared his throat a little before he spoke:

'What else could I say other than it's to my honour, or rather to our honour, I should say! I'm a simple agrarian (his sons had taught him this expression because the old title of 'peasant,' which always presupposes a 'master,' was not in use anymore by sovereign people), I'm a simple agrarian and don't know how to make learned and high-sounding speeches! I can only welcome the friendly young women who please me in every way, and I had never thought of getting such refined daughters-in-law. May the Lord bless you!'

'I've asked that for a long time already!' cried Mama Weidelich, 'that's all right with me. Let's drink to it.'

She again drained her glass and this time, however, wiped her eyes instead of her mouth; all her aspirations and endeavours, for the most part, seemed now to be fulfilled. Now she ran again into the kitchen to do her part in the baking for the festive occasion; coffee could be heard being ground, sugar being pounded, and between all this, loud conversation with the servant who, lifting up a *Spritzkuchen* on a long fork, could not recover from astonishment over the event.

There was no time left for the walk which the young people had hoped to take; the wife did not want the unexpected engagement celebration to curtail her triumph and she also imparted the

cheerfulness of her disposition to the others, especially to the two brides who found here more recognition for the persistence of their feelings than in their own home, and they open-heartedly rejoiced in that. There were even some little songs sung in unison; inquisitive children congregated in front of the house by the old fountain; women of the neighbourhood who were attracted by the rumour and who tried to share in a glimpse of the engaged couples stood next to the sawn-off gun barrel.

They succeeded too. In spite of the motherly entreaties the young men were not able to stay overnight because both had postponed some business to the next morning; however, the future brides were, after all, happy to be on the way home so as to be there before their mother.

As a result the spectators around the fountain, women and children, unexpectedly saw the little festive procession coming out of the door and moving across the square, two by two, first the bridal couples and then the parents acting as a rearguard. Mama Weidelich wanted to be seen and had insisted on accompanying them for a short distance.

'Look!' whispered the people, 'here they come. Those are the clerks, my goodness! And those are the girls who are supposed to be very rich. They're neat—pictures of gentle womanhood. And the old woman—why, she's blooming just like a rose! Good evening, Mrs. Weidelich; good evening, Mr. Weidelich.'

She nodded gratefully to the women as they stood close-by along the way.

CHAPTER 11

AFTER THE DOUBLE ENGAGEMENT had at last taken place the other mother, Marie Salander, attended all the more painstakingly and generously to the dowries of her daughters. They were supposed to take along to Lautenspiel in the Unterlaub, and to Lindenberg not only all of the household furnishings, such as linens and the like, but almost all the other things that go to make up a home. Martin said that the people at the Finch also might want to provide the customary things, but she said that above all she wished that the children should be able to sit, stand, sleep and awaken in the things which they had taken along, for one never knows what that might be worth. A further advantage consisted of the more mellow, even simple tastes which would result when they brought along their own things. If one did not live under an old paternal roof, one had to try to make the new things appear homely to the eyes.

‘Marie, stop!’ Salander laughed. ‘Where did you dream that up? On top of all you become scholarly and apply theories to furniture.’

‘Let me be,’ she said, ‘I’m not in the mood for nonsense!’

Setti and Netti gladly let their mother alone in order to keep her good will; she almost resembled a young girl who one day came upon her old doll house and dreamily began to play. She appeared as if one dare not interrupt her lest one awaken the open secret of her sorrow.

Meanwhile, the daughters had other worries; the problem of who should be invited to the wedding gave them plenty to do. That both wedding feasts had to be combined into one seemed to lie in the very nature of this extraordinary wedding story itself and to be a fit crowning of the whole artifice of love—a reward for the hardship suffered.

But the Salander family had no wide-spread friendships and social connections, partly because of their former reverses of fortune and also because of Salander’s political conduct. Well-to-do business people and the like who step out of the ranks of those

who are considered as level-headed and storm ahead with the stirred-up masses pass, at least in the eyes of their equals, as strange, unfamiliar freaks to whom the established order of the state is a toy of passion or ambition. Out of this always grows a relaxation of the more intimate relationships while the general respectability remains untouched—if only for business reasons. At least in this manner Martin Salander tried to explain to his family the dilemma which loomed in the selection of wedding guests. As for his daughters they did not have any intimate girl friends. Under these circumstances the father for a time thought of turning the wedding into a free-for-all and of inviting a crowd of Democrats along with their womenfolk which, together with the expected followers of the Weidelichs, would present a fair picture, a cross section of the people. The mother, however, knew how to dissuade him; he realised, too, that perhaps it would not be well to make a celebration of a political party of this wedding which might have an unforetold outcome. The daughters also were reluctant to present an open spectacle of their happiness which they had won with a struggle.

All the more eagerly the brides wished that their brother Arnold would come to the wedding. They had sent a letter, which they had composed jointly, to him in England after his having answered the first public announcement of the engagement with a short wish for their happiness—without any jesting at all.

A letter of Arnold's, addressed to the father, followed the quadruple invitation. 'Dearest Father!' he wrote, 'your pressing collective summons to come to the wedding has certainly done my dutiful son's and brotherly heart good, and it almost hurts me to be compelled to rob myself of the pleasure which beckons to me so enticingly. Perhaps my dear sisters won't find it gallant if I arbitrarily decide over this compulsion, but it is so; I cannot suddenly interrupt my present stay because of a wedding. There is always the possibility that once I am home I might not go back, you know how those things are. May it be said without intending to cause jealousy, that my dear mother is a "speciality of my heart" and will understand me.

'Dearest Father! I have to confess to you that I don't study law here as we had agreed upon, but English history in which, indeed, some law is always included—quite legal and crusty. I know well enough that one doesn't need to go to a country in

order to study its history; once there, however, one can benefit by learning from observation, and that is not to be scorned.

'I must now pass over to what is allied with this and which I must submit for your consideration. Until now you had wished that I begin the practice of law immediately after I have returned home and, likewise, that I begin at once to take an interest in a political life. With your consent I'd like to go about it somewhat differently. I will continue to devote myself to the further study of jurisprudence as much as I can, but I feel a strong desire, more than was the case up to this hour, to dedicate myself to historical studies which I picture to myself as follows. For a time our means will permit me to live in Switzerland as an independent private scholar, which could be combined very well with this or that activity in your business so that I don't eat entirely *gratis*. In the past I have spent many hours at your desk working for you. If, in this way, a middling merchant would emerge then some scholarliness wouldn't hurt him, and the question as to what the future of your firm shall be could be answered, if necessary, at least temporarily. Well then, a young lawyer works in the firm of his father according to need and occasion and, besides, continues studying history for his own pleasure in order better to understand the forthcoming history and in order to learn to measure its dimensions and to estimate its values of conditions.'

'What the devil is that?' Martin interrupted himself while reading and vainly pondered the meaning of the phrase, but then he read on:

'What will become of that, you ask; I will give you the key at once. At G—— I associated with several compatriots who especially liked to discuss the political situation in Switzerland and who, with wise commentaries, exchanged the reports received. One of them, from the Canton X, was visited by his father who was travelling to a seaside resort. He spent one evening with his son and us, listening to our conversation in which we soon included the old gentleman. When he heard an impatient and rash judgement or two he was led to conclude that the situation in question could be alleviated only by a new generation of legislators, by new forces. The old man smiled and said that according to his experience it was not a question of a lack of young forces which, indeed, are supplied incessantly anyway by the workings

of man but, on the contrary, it was a question of a more deliberate and persevering completion of what already had been achieved. He now related quite vividly how he had experienced it for the third time—that the sons of the men who had brought about forceful changes and who were in their best years, these self-same sons had, as students got together and agreed that they would do much better when it was their turn. Without knowing what this fabulous innovation was to be, they later really had kept their word—as if they had sworn to it on the Rütli.* During this time they indeed had confused and disturbed the revered legislation until their own offspring took the same oath and with great to-do the new generation helped them from their offices—or at least tried to. Seen in this light progress is only a blind rushing towards the end. It resembles a ground-beetle running over a round table top, and having arrived at the edge falls to the floor or, at the most, runs along the edge in a circle if it does not prefer to turn around and run back, in which case it then comes again to the edge on the opposite side. It is a natural law that all life consumes itself and comes to an end faster the more restlessly it is being lived; therefore, he concluded humorously, if a nation chases itself to death, prematurely forcing out its utmost potentialities, he could not consider it merely an expedient means for extending life.

‘The reprimanding speech of this old gentleman stunned us not a little but we received it with respect; we had to admit the truth since we had already observed similar phenomena among the youth and we laughed over its humour.

‘Afterwards I repeatedly discussed this conversation with a friend who is rather close to me. From the old man’s point of view we pondered anew the current of political affairs which we received from our homeland. In short, we came at last to the decision, in contrast with the school-bench agitators, not to establish ourselves as a new generation but we intend to make ourselves useful for all the events where it might become necessary for us to stand up, and to help find the ways and means to do this. To think about public affairs is always necessary but to prattle about them, never.

‘Dear Father! As explained above, this is now the attitude or mood out of which I intend to arrange my behaviour, if for the

* The place of meeting of the founders of Swiss freedom.

time being you can endure your son in your house—the tribute which a family owes to the public life you, in the meantime, are paying in full with your own person so that I can, for a long time to come, improve and educate myself in the shadow of your example.'

Martin laid the lengthy letter open on his desk, took it up again, turned the pages and said:

'What is this anyway? Is he joking or serious? History indeed! Or, wait a minute? Something's beginning to dawn on me. What kind of an old man is that with a beetle on the table which he compares with progress? I almost believe that I've brought a young doctrinaire into the world. He knows that I stand for progress and he comes along with that beetle! That's doctrinaire criticism; possibly the whole story of that old rascal was invented! But then again, he's too honest and serious for that. After all, if he wants to help along in the business that can only be a joy to me; a Doctor of Jurisprudence is certainly becoming to it. If he gets interested in his profession he'll soon lose his historical doctrinairism in politics! Dimensions and values of conditions of the forthcoming history! Does he think he can hear the grass grow* Does he want to fry eggs with a thermometer in the frying pan?† Let it be! If he only knows his profession then this or that can be learned from him—something he doesn't think about. There's something to that business of the quiet, private scholar and of the merchant who waits to see whether or not he'll come to the fore; it looks fine, especially if it can be done comfortably. I'm more and more pleased about it! What more did he write? He wants to travel another year yet if it could be done. Why not? I wish that I could have done it too when I was young—if only to teach myself. To be sure, I had to travel far enough later, but because of drudgery could scarcely see anything and had to think about my wife and children.'

He took the letter to the women who were troubled by it for different reasons; the daughters because their brother would not be coming to the wedding, the mother because she had to do without her son still longer and just at a time when she was losing

* *Gras wachsen hören*: to hear more than is necessary or to read between the lines where there is nothing to read.

† *Will er eingeschlagene Eier backen, den Thermometer in der Pfanne*: an image for being too sensitive, too careful.

her daughters. And he had never caused her anguish before. But his plans for the future, or however one wanted to call the statement of his intent, to which Martin called her attention, filled her with superb joy, so worthy and serious everything seemed to her that he wrote; at last she approved of everything, even the journey. Later, alone with her husband she could not refrain from comparing herself, with a certain sense of superiority, to her daughters' future mother-in-law and to praise her own son in respect to the twins.

Salander became downright jealous of him.

'You're a little bit of a snob,' he said. 'I just don't know why you can't stand those people! Just wait, he who laughs last laughs best. The twins may become a pair of stalwart men and get to the top while our Arnold, with his whims, will be an insignificant stay-at-home!'

He took the letter along to the office and read it through again. Once more the image of the old man's progressive beetle annoyed and angered him. One thought led to the next. Salander would have liked to have had Arnold at the wedding too, and having arrived at this topic he suddenly changed his opinion on the celebration and decided to observe a political wedding in order to vex his doctrinaire offshoot, so that, though far away, he would know what the score was.

Without taking his wife into his confidence any further, he met with his future sons-in-law and plotted with them. In accordance with the spirit of the times they dismissed the idea of driving up with a large number of coaches and they chose the railway as their means of transportation. The guests invited from the city and its outlying districts are to go to the railway station where the wedding party and their parents meet them. Everyone is suitably attired as if going to a Sunday outing, but no evening gowns, no tail coats can be seen. The breakfast is eaten in the hall of the railway station, right in the midst of the passing travellers—a picture of busy life. It is seen to that when the hall is quiet, after the trains have gone and the rooms are empty, the best is served up. Then a chartered train carries the wedding party to where the marriage ceremony is to take place; it is a fine-looking town with a good inn and it lies midway between Münsterburg, Lindenberg, and Unterlaub. Two small singing groups, which are composed of mutual friends and

hangers-on of the bridegrooms, receive the gathering and to the strains of loud martial music played by a village band escort them to the church where a Democratic minister gives the sermon and marries the two couples. Then they all go to the wedding feast for which the tables are being laid, in case of good weather, in the orchard near the largest inn; a number of additional guests of the surrounding districts are invited, among whom are good orators.

A little play interrupts the feast and the singing. Through allegorical figures it alludes to the different party affiliations of the two councillors, it discusses and settles a truce between the Democrats and the Old Liberals, not without hints to the double, close, brotherly-sisterly union of the wedding party which is being proclaimed as a most beautiful model for the reunion of the parties of the country, etc. As is to be expected, afterwards a small gathering has developed from both the guests and the onlooking and participating population which is to be treated in a friendly manner. Then the speakers, who are now beginning to appear, utilise the sequence of customary toasts for inserting those remarks which are suitable for uplifting the minds of the people and which are to culminate in the highest ethical principles of a free state—the roots of which are founded in the free family.

Dancing is not considered for the time being, but rather the music is counted upon for intoning and accompanying patriotic songs and songs of freedom which, sung by the whole crowd in the gleam of torches, ought to be heard far and wide through the dark. First to their amazement and later to their great satisfaction, Salander had come to an understanding with the sons Weidelich about the programme and where it would take place and, to be sure, with a final remark that as originator of the project he, of course, assume the whole cost. In a good mood he journeyed back to Münsterburg.

So, Master Arnold, you who think hears more than there is to hear, he chuckled to himself, if you were to come to your sisters' wedding you'd learn some more! You'd learn that this country is no round table-top where beetles run to and fro! Your old man perhaps has thought of crabs who have no eyes in their tails with which to see when they pursue their progressive path!

In his happy mood he told his wife and daughters of the course

of the celebration as it was decided upon. To his puzzlement his wife remained completely complacent and appeared to be not so completely dissatisfied.

'I'm happy,' he said, 'that you no longer offer any opposition; you'll see that it'll result in an excellent wedding celebration, such as is not held every day!'

With gently understanding smiles meant for her daughters she answered:

'Yes, while you were telling me about it I saw it in a different light, now I believe that because of this extraordinary kind of wedding, its strange history will be pushed into the background or perhaps be completely balanced!'

'Is that right? See how shrewd you are? I didn't even think about that!'

'By the way, I feel a little better about the matter too. I was up at the Finch today on dowry matters and found Mrs. Weidelich doing her weekly housecleaning. I had to wait a little while so I watched her. I was pleased that she didn't make a single compliment. And then I was thoroughly edified by the vigorous industry with which she wielded and directed the work; she's truly tireless and efficient, taking a hand in it and at the same time caring for the washerwomen and ironers. I also spoke to her husband and he, in his open modesty and calmness, pleased me more than did his wife. Then too, he seemed never to be idle, moving around without any wasted motions. Well, I thought, if the boys haven't fallen far away from the trunk, then the marriage can't fail.'

'Do you hear that, children? Doesn't that make you happy?' Salander asked his daughters.

'What?' they asked, awakened from their gloomy speculations in which they had paid no attention at all to the conversation of their parents. Their eyes were even full of tears.

By and by it was revealed that their sadness was brought about because of the fact that the breakfast on their wedding day would not be held in a first-class inn but in a railway station restaurant among travelling salesmen and gaping Englishwomen and that there were to be no coaches, only for themselves. They were also sad because even the poorest servant girl could ride to the church in a hackney-carriage; either they would march on foot to the station in their wedding gowns and veils, myrtle wreaths on their

heads, perhaps with umbrellas on their arms, or the guests would be ordered to dress like Rigi tourists.*

'That's strange! Your future husbands have just accepted this idea with true rejoicing, they think of being the most distinctive individuals present. They're even having white linen summer suits made and will wear straw hats!' reported the father.

'They're doing that? Then we're simply not going along!' said Setti, 'we haven't waited and held out so long in order to make a masquerade out of our wedding.'

'No, we won't do that,' confirmed Netti, 'we've something to say about it too!'

Their mother settled the quarrel.

'Strictly speaking, they're right as to what concerns this portion of the celebration,' she said, 'still it would be odd to have a wedding breakfast in the railway station, and then too, the cuisine in a good hotel would be more suitable. That tramping on foot really can't be, the city has too many people for that; a thousand children would run in front of us and also follow along. We couldn't refuse the girls wedding dresses which they only wear once in their lives; above all else coaches are necessary so we must provide them for the entire company! That part of the wedding which is to be held out in the village can remain according to your programme but this portion is, indeed, the most important.'

'Good, I agree!' Martin decided. 'But then we'll breakfast in the large hall in the Four Winds and we'll travel there and to the railway station, for all I care, in a hundred or more coaches. I'd like to have the Four Winds because that place has a political atmosphere.'

For perhaps the first time, Mrs. Marie Salander faced her husband with her mouth quivering imperceptibly and with a dubious questioning expression in her eyes.

After all the preparations the day was finally there—in the middle of the month of June and with cloudless skies. The coaches with the brides and their parents travelled from the Salander household to the Four Winds while in a number of other carriages around forty persons of both sexes travelled. Except for the bridegrooms and the two fathers almost all the men

* The summit of the Rigi is a popular place for tourists and practically everyone visiting Switzerland makes this trip. Keller is obviously referring to the great variety of costumes which can be seen there.

appeared in comfortable garments of every colour and cut. Only Mr. Möni Wighart, perhaps the sole guest who was not a Democrat, came dressed in black. He voted continually with the Liberals but sometimes was delighted when they received a box on the ears because he had predicted it and he did not take it too much to heart. Today he was exceedingly excited over the wedding celebration which had caused so much talk in advance, and he had accepted his old friend's invitation gratefully.

All of the women came dressed as they only are for weddings, with curled hair, flowers and other decorations according to age, taste and means—and all that without any prior arrangement! Each did whatever she wished and all had wished the same in spite of the urgings of their husbands who followed Salander's instructions. They now received double delight when, with devoted curiosity, they gathered around the brides and admired their romantic finery and appearance which they called 'fairy-like,' although they had been led to believe that the brides would also appear in their usual Sunday best.

But Setti and Netti felt greatly embarrassed for never before had there been a wedding in Münsterburg in which the brides had seen so few faces they were able to recognise among the guests.

Meanwhile, the good breakfast together with the sunny day very soon created a friendly mood, and the chartered train in the station received a company quite uniformly ready for gaiety and merriment. In an hour they were at the spot. On the square eight experienced and dexterous musicians played a fine march until the train had stopped and the passengers had climbed out; the guests from the country who had gathered there in the waiting room greeted the new arrivals and, with the latter, formed the procession which was to proceed to the church. As soon as they were outside, the musicians immediately turned around and, with resounding tunes, led the procession to the church. That portion of the people who were not already sitting there, especially the young ones, ran along in a bunch where the notable twin brothers and the pretty, equally noteworthy brides walked.

In the church, which was completely filled, two little groups of singers stood in the gallery, each led by a schoolmaster with a yellow pitch pipe which also served him as a conductor's baton. They had no rhythm in its widest sense for instead of singing together as one choir they were grouped as if they wanted to sing

the well-known 'Pintschgau Pilgrim's Song.'* Nevertheless, among the brandishings of the two pitch pipes they quite properly intoned in unison, a church hymn which was thoroughly drowned out by the congregational singing.

After that the preacher read aloud a specially composed prayer which equally represented the church's attitude and the claims of free thought, and he delivered a fine sermon or religious speech based upon the event being celebrated, interpreting it in many ways and elaborating it into a parable which generally pleased them and which was called truly edifying.

In conclusion, the singers delivered a choice arrangement of Uhland's 'Bride's Song.' This was somewhat more difficult for them than the preceding hymn for now they had to sing without the congregation and the yellow pitch pipes did not go up and down at the same time. Because of the present special occasion the text was altered a little more than usual. Instead of the introduction:

The house I bless and praise loudly
Which has received a lovely bride,
Must now bloom into a garden.

it was sung in this manner:

The house I bless and praise today
Has received two lovely brides.

and instead of 'From the bridal chamber steps a glorious sun,' it was sung: 'steps a double sun!'

But no one noticed the unnecessary ruination and the little confusion of time and harmony found tolerant listeners. Satisfied with good intentions the people, when among themselves, consider a true performance of art as something aristocratic, and on all levels of society are eager to democratize anything that gets into their ken.

In approximately that way Martin Salander expressed himself to his wife later when she sat next to him at the table and remarked that she thought that the singers had sung rather flat.

'And the people are right!' he concluded.

'Why so? At one time, thank goodness it was some time ago,

* A folk-song in which the parts are sung like an echo by one portion of the singers.

you thought differently when that Wohlwend fellow sang so out of tune and when he spoke his piece!'

'Hm, yes, that really is not the same thing! That happened in a cultured city among a company of educated people whom he had annoyed. Here he would have spoiled no one's pleasure.'

But Marie Salander did not let her husband off that easily from this conversation which they were carrying on in low voices.

'But it still seems to me that it's not entirely right not to enlighten the people about these things. Why then did they have to try such a difficult piece if they couldn't sing it? It seems to me that whoever bungles things becomes accustomed to it in all other matters and finally can't be told the truth anymore—it simply would not be tolerated.'

Martin, looking into the crystal goblet which he was holding in his hand, was silent for a minute, thinking. Then he touched his glass to Marie's and said softly:

'Let's very quietly drink to your health, Marie. You ought to have the first toast at this wedding. And now we'll let matters take their course.' Without delay she took a larger swallow than usual and exchanged with him one of those short, sunny and silvery glances which fade more and more in the span of time, as human beings change imperceptibly in wind and weather—so that the clever become less clever, the less clever become fools and the fools quickly become scoundrels before they die—as if they would miss something, nobody knows what.

When Mama Weidelich, who sat opposite, observed that clandestine toast of the Salanders she also held her glass across the table and called happily: 'My goodness, can't I join in?' They joined in with her; Father Weidelich did too, and without anyone knowing how it originated or what it meant, the clinking of glasses spread around the whole table and over all the tables like the ringing of an alarm bell; and as no one was able to find out for certain, everyone laughed over the false alarm which was not less pleasurable for all that.

As the meal had only just begun, Salander, fearing a premature speech would disturb the guests in their meal, interrupt the order in serving and allow the plates to cool, asked the music to blow and to continue playing diligently. The elderly army buglers did this in the most suitable manner. Instead of the familiar soldiers' marches they continued with one of their con-

cert pieces with which they used to show-off, namely the Overture to the opera 'Wilhelm Tell' arranged for a small brass-band. With honest toil and trusting in God they very cautiously helped themselves over the sea of difficulties in an easy, slow rhythm so that the feasting people were never irritated either in eating or in the friendly murmuring of the individual neighbouring groups: in the end, which even this performance had to have, they rewarded the conscientious eight men with a thundering 'bravo.' After a short pause they played a spirited march, somewhat later a beloved folk song and then, with utmost haste, let the saliva run out of their instruments and climbed down the few stairs from their stage in order to hasten to the corner where a table was laid for them also.

While dishes were being exchanged in anticipation of the new course, the pastor used that moment to propose the first toast to the bridal couples and to their parents. With the back of his knife he struck his glass forcefully, and aided by a cry for silence, he looked around domineeringly until the clatter of dishes ceased; then he raised his voice which carried quite some distance. His toast amounted to a supplement to his already-delivered sermon. First he sketched the parental home of the just-married youths, of the simple farmer who, together with his active wife, had risen to modest prosperity, but to what purpose? 'To bestow the blessings of our schools upon that pair of youths whom God, acting in the universe, has, in Christian matrimony, given to them with His benevolent hand. They did it with the same untiring readiness for sacrifice with which our people have founded our schools and upheld them through all tribulations. And how has this blessing been revealed? it is an eternally memorable example. Scarcely at the minimum age the people have called these youths, yes, I say youths, to important offices, the faithful administration of which, especially in an agricultural economy, is so infinitely important. And not only that. To our highest authority which has over it only the entire people and God, and fears nobody else have the people sent them, both at the same time, an honour which scarcely ever has been bestowed upon such a humble house. See there! And see them sitting together, parents and sons, in all their worth as if it were no business of theirs.'

Of course they looked steadfastly at the speaker since all the people were looking steadfastly towards them and shouting ap-

proval. Not until now did the father turn away and cast down his eyes with embarrassment; the mother wiping her eyes from which the tears flowed, clasped her hands; the sons, seated next to their brides, bent slightly towards the people and towards the speaker who continued further: 'We enter the home of the brides and what do we see? We also see a man who has risen from the people and who through diligence and industry has soared up and who has again climbed upward higher than before in spite of all reversals of fortune. In distant parts of the world, in the struggle for existence, he always returns to his family with his lawful spoils of war, to his children whom his wife, a model of noble womanhood, conscientiously rears. An esteemed business man he is now rich, a great man among the great. What does he do? Does he build palaces and villas for himself? Does he ride in coaches, maintain a stable like others of his means? No. He knows finer pleasures! It is the ideals of his youth which he follows continually now as before, to them he is attached, for them he works and lives and struggles; he thinks of them both asleep and awake. And what kind of ideals are they, wherein do they lie? They lie with you, O people! They are your welfare, your education, your rights, your freedom, to which he dedicates time and work which he can spare from the stress of his business life. And what does he demand in exchange? Recognition? Honorary posts? Title and office? Nothing that I know of my friends! There he sits among us with his esteemed wife unassuming as the lowliest in order to offer to the people, to the youthful sons and representatives of the people, his greatest treasures—his beloved daughters. A wedding full of significance! Did he want to have it celebrated in the flower-bedecked, carpeted cathedral in the stately halls of the capital city? Here to our rural region he was drawn; our little old village church, these green lawns, the shade of these fruit trees is the place which he selected in order to hold the celebration right in the middle, at the heart of the people; here he is satisfied and here the new families should also be established and remain contented; brighter stars are not able to shine over our roofs than the ideals of our friend Martin Salander! Look at the lovely brides in their veils and myrtle wreaths, look at the noble parents and now help me to make the most ardent toast to the four joined hosts, with wishes of luck, prosperity and blessings.'

By the time the cheers and clinking of glasses had subsided the singers gathered and executed a patriotic song customarily sung at political and other public affairs. The preacher, having descended from the platform, wended his way to the head of the table where the celebrants were sitting and where also his seat was located. In his hand he carried a trophy given for marksmanship which he had borrowed from the innkeeper and which was to be used as his chalice.

Just now Salander said to his wife, who was blood-red in the face and did not look up, that the minister had made impossible the speech which he had intended to deliver. All points of view were twisted by the heavy adulation——. Then the preacher interrupted him with the goblet which he carried around. Salander paused and touched his glass to that of the parson.

‘I’m grateful for your good opinion!’ he said shaking hands with him.

‘What do you mean, good opinion? Did I tell a lie?’ asked the minister in a voice which people of that type, in order to make further conversation impossible, usually use in such unexpected situations.

A step further, drinking with Mrs. Marie Salander, he said: ‘How about you, honoured lady, aren’t you satisfied with your toast either?’

‘On the contrary, more than satisfied, your Reverence,’ she answered, ‘indeed, I thank you for only what I have a claim to.’

‘I can’t measure that exactly, as you can imagine, so I take for granted that you’re thanking me for everything that I’ve said. A popular speaker must always present the whole story, one that is, so to say, artistically rounded off. Whoever ventures into danger perishes; that you mustn’t forget.’

‘We don’t want to quarrel, Reverend! To your health!’

With that she appeared to be dismissing him and, in a dignified manner, he walked around the upper-end of the table to the other parents.

When he drank with Jacob Weidelich the latter said nothing except that he thanked him for the honour; whereupon the clergyman turned to Frau Amalie.

‘And how satisfied are you with my toast, Mrs. Weidelich, did I please you?’

‘You did beautifully, Reverend, if only I were able to speak in

such a manner. It must be something very beautiful if one can cause so much joy to the people. Look here, I don't care for myself, I'm an ignorant woman, yet for the sake of my sons I'm so very happy to hear such things. To your health also, Reverend, I thank you a thousand times.'

The preacher looked at her with a benevolent smile on his face. She beamed with delight, like a rose on which the sun shone and also because of the numerous sips which she had had that day and which, thereby, made her look like the wife of a governor of a province. On the advice of the Salander girls she had had a hairdresser come and fix her hair, which was still brown, and dress it up with a little bit of lace. On the dark, brand-new silk dress sparkled her watch and chain along with a brooch which contained photographs on porcelain of the twins when they were boys.

She had risen and, glass in hand, went along with the preacher. When he and his shooting trophy neared the bridal couples she was there to drink with them and to ask how they had liked the toast and how things were going.

'Good!' they said with a strange mixture of happiness and embarrassment while taking each other's hands. The young fellows had taken the minister's speech at face value and yet with the feeling that everything was not quite right, and they deliberated whether they should not speak and step forward; in that moment they did not know what to say which would satisfy them and they found that it was more proper for them to keep silent on this day. Nevertheless, the youthful, imprudent vanity and self-satisfaction shone in their handsome faces and gave them a touch of immaturity next to their blooming, fully matured brides; the latter also became aware of an odd sensation in the bright daylight of this festival—perhaps about the same as a wealthy beauty who, with open eyes, has turned to a poor insignificant man with her affections and yet wishes that the wedding were over and done with.

Since a new course was being served the elder Salanders decided that they had eaten enough for now and that they would take a walk among the tables and around the orchard. The two Weidelichs would do the same later.

When Marie walked at Salander's arm something compelled her to open her heart concerning the minister.

'He seems to be a queer man!' she said, 'First that thick flattery and afterward when he comes to collect the thanks and one makes the least polite remark he immediately replies with barbed words, the meaning of which has to be searched for! With what artful rudeness he answered you in a flash! With the same politeness he'd given me to understand that it was not a question of whether or not I personally liked it because it was an artistically constructed speech intended for the general public.'

'You shouldn't interpret that as being dangerous,' Martin objected, 'he's always at odds with his own sophistry which forces itself directly into his speech even if he doesn't want to achieve anything by it. He uses it unknowingly, as a natural means of defence, even where no one can dispute with him. Once I spoke to him about a party member and deplored the fact that his man lied so much. He answered that he was the best of fathers and that he raised his family perfectly. When he said that I was done with him because it wasn't convenient for him to speak on this theme, for he didn't know how far matters could turn against him.'

'Oh God,' Frau Marie said in her simplicity, 'that certainly is a wretched existence!'

'Not that wretched! That's only a mannerism. Everyone who talks a great deal, especially in politics, has his habits and there are some who are in the habit of speaking untruths and have nothing evil in mind. These individuals are always forced to place little traps in front of others, to lead them onto ice, to put dangerous questions to them; all that forms a rather protective hedge for themselves, a system of repulsion as a means of attack. But what kind of wedding talk is this!'

Here and there they stopped, greeting the guests whom they definitely did not disturb in enjoying the delights of the table. Then they wandered along the fence which surrounded the orchard. There, all kinds of onlookers had already begun to gather and in the shade of the overhanging branches endeavoured to hear something. Later it was seen to that refreshing drinks and baskets full of pastries were offered to the closing-in circle of humanity for all that would like to take some.

Some tables for vessels and containers were now being erected along the picket-fence. A little boy in white shirt sleeves, holding the thumbs of both hands in the arm holes of his Sunday vest like an adult, stood first and foremost and followed this

preparation with open mouth and with great suspense. Frau Marie could not refrain from getting a little piece of cake from the nearest table and holding it in front of the mouth of the boy who immediately bit into it. It seemed as if the little chap were going to continue eating in this manner; not until another larger boy also wanted to dig his teeth into the cake did he grasp the piece and dashed off like a streak of lightning.

It was also time for the brides' parents to take a turn around; they were informed that a little play was ready to be performed and they hurried to their places. Nearby, on the wooden terrace of the neighbouring house, someone had outlined the play space by means of several dozen ells of white and red coloured cotton cloths. The play to be performed consisted of a dialogue written in rhymed verse approximately according to the ideas propounded by Salander. The content or text he himself did not know since he had not found the time to attend to it after the discussion with the geniuses concerned.

When a fanfare of trumpets gave the signal and the entire wedding looked towards the little theatre, out of the cloths stepped a hardy, young farmer's wife with a wooden ladle or cooking spoon in her belt and she introduced herself as Genuine Democracy—that is, the government of the people who are accustomed to cook their broth themselves, to serve it and to eat it warm and so forth. Afterward, from the other side, came an elderly so-called middle-class gentleman in the costume of the early thirties with a high hat, high peaked collar, blue tail-coat and little ear-rings. He looked much more comical than Salander had thought he should seem to be and was proper for the occasion. Asked who he was and where he wanted to go he introduced himself as Old Liberalism. He had heard that a large democratic wedding would be celebrated and although he liked democracy from afar rather than from close up, he would still like to see a little bit of how it looked in family life—if it could be done unnoticed. The robust young woman said that he had come to the right place because she was Democracy; he should just keep close to her and she would show him everything. But as he stepped closer and very gently, somewhat inquisitively, wanted to lift up the cloth covering her bosom she pulled out the ladle and hit him on his hat so hard that it resounded like a drum.

Accompanied by such jests they started giving each other

lessons, but Old Liberalism, just as it happens in real life without becoming aware of it, adopted one democratic sentence after another, defending it against her. Meanwhile, her new sentences preceding his, she drummed on his hat.

When they finally saw that by this means they would not come together very soon they decided on a provisional peace in order to take part in the wedding and perhaps get married themselves if it had to be. Then the music suddenly began to play a polka. Democracy and Liberalism took hold of each other and performed an amusing dance. In doing so that wild person dragged the good man around so violently that his coat-tails flew, his feet became tangled and the points of his collar turned around and faced the back. In short, the two actors did not forgo any of the tomfooleries customary on such occasions. At last they retired, the woman using the ladle to beat 'Taps' on the man's hat as she whistled the accompaniment.

The joyous laughter both inside and outside the orchard changed into jubilant shouts of applause. Only a little cluster of Old Liberal followers of Isidor Weidelich who had been invited to please him made cross faces and grumbled among themselves that if they had known that they were going to be made fun of they would not have come. They were honest people who during all the unkindnesses of the times remained true to their convictions, and they did not even understand the allusion to the indecisiveness or weakness which, though basically correct, only helps to bring about what it fears.

Martin Salander also was taken aback by the form in which his suggestion had been received and as host he felt hurt. Therefore, he now utilised the ensuing silence to make the speech which he was supposed to deliver, repairing the harm with a satisfying figure of speech and re-establishing the purer idea which he had originally seen in that skit.

He succeeded tolerably well and the same people who previously had enthusiastically applauded the wanton treatment of Liberalism now applauded him as he offered toasts, among others, to the honourable representatives of the Old Liberal Party who were present—as witnesses of the true word. He stated that one has to walk together in joy and in sorrow and to look forward to a better future which would know only one party—that of united and contented patriots.

The so-called opening of the sluices had now taken place. Almost unceasingly during two full hours toasts were being offered from all sides. For the greater comfort or for the consolation of the guests a new meal had begun with other foods and finer wines. With the approaching darkness the two bridal couples were supposed to leave the celebration and to take the through-trains in order to reach, on the one hand, the Lindenberg and, on the other, the vicinity of Lautenspiel. They were trains which, conveniently, met here at the same time. The newly-weds had forgone a honeymoon because the notaries did not yet have any deputies and the brides had no desires concerning a trip—rather they did not wish for anything more ardently than to envelop themselves in the idylls of their new domesticity far from the noise of the world. Everything was arranged accordingly, and in each house an able serving girl was waiting.

The two pairs concluded a circuit which they had made among the guests, thanking them for the honour they had been accorded and extending fitting farewells; the tables were already set with numerous lights and on the edges of the orchard cauldrons of pitch were being ignited. Having arrived at the foot of the little stage they stood still a moment; then at the same time the thought came to the brothers that they, as members of the Cantonal Council should, after all that had gone before, still add a word in appreciation. They could do it most appropriately so they thought, if they, in person so to speak, being members of the parties concerned would illustrate the reconciliation of the parties which had been announced by their father-in-law. They quickly mounted the stage and while making fitting short speeches shook each other's hand in view of the entire wedding party. While they decided which one of them should speak first, Isidor, the Old Liberal, or Julian, the Democrat, a knocking noise rose from the platform over their heads and attracted everyone's attention. All turned their glances in that direction.

Two louts, or ragged tramps, with knotted sticks and bundles on their backs approached arm in arm and loitered around, bawling. They wore dishevelled wigs, beards of oakum and huge false noses so that not a single person suspected who they were. They appeared not to know any more where they ought to go; finally they gave up and faced one another. Clearly they were two buffoons who in this disguise appeared to have a share in the

festivity; amused, everyone waited to see what they would do. After they had grumbled a little over Fate, God and the world, they began to deliberate on how they could begin to get along honestly. They enumerated a number of absurd ideas which they had already tried or which they could attempt; finally one hit upon the notion of making use of his conviction which still must be somewhere since he had never used it. 'Conviction,' cried the other, 'I must still have something like that too—one like that of a newly-born child!' Immediately they removed the bundles from their backs, untied them and rummaged around in the unholy trash but they did not find anything for a long time. 'Stop!' one cried, 'this must be something!' and he produced a little wooden needle-case. Warily he lifted the little cover halfway and with one eye he looked into the cavity. 'Yes, there it sits,' he cried and immediately closed it again. The other tramp found a tiny pillbox, opened it just as cautiously as the first did his needle-box and closed it just as quickly, shouting that his conviction was sitting inside safe and sound also.

Since each of them was now sure of his possession, it was asked what was to be done with it. Suddenly one of the tramps remembered that a splendid wedding between the pure maid Democracy and the old gentleman Liberalism would be celebrated in the region very soon and for this occasion a large supply of conviction would be necessary and, of course, of both kinds—of the liberal and of the democratic. He who is supplied with it, and even a small amount is welcome, would be well taken care of, and if he eats and guzzles boldly then he is sure of a good paying position with a permanent vacation, etc. They agreed to go to the wedding and to offer their convictions. But so as not to embarrass themselves they decided that each one would sit on different sides of the church, one on the brides' side and the other on the bridegrooms'. Again they examined the little possessions in the needle-case and in the box to see whether or not they could not find some directions on those little things. However, they could not define anything at all and, therefore, devised the means of throwing dice to determine whose conviction ought to be liberal and whose should be democratic.

So they sat down on the ground, pulled out a dusty, old leather dice box and dice and shook for the parties, naturally again with all kinds of jokes and nonsense. 'It's a miserable game!' cried

one of them, 'if one has no beer to accompany it! We'll pretend to have a couple of freshly filled mugs. Look at the beautiful froth! Drink!'

Finally they were finished with their dice throwing, which they knew how to delay with a considerable amount of cheating. Each repeatedly impressed his party's name in his mind and, for greater certainty, made a knot in the old handkerchief which one of them possessed so that he carried both assurances with him. Then as they had come, with hullabaloo and shouting, they went behind the curtains and disappeared.

During the entire time the notaries with their brides had stood before the stage and silently had looked up. With red faces they now looked at each other but did not dare to speak. Fortunately it was high time that they went to the station; they already had been reminded of this. After first changing into other clothes they set out, unnoticed, accompanied by their parents. Both trains were ready to depart. The brothers found a moment's time to ask each other which of them had blabbed out the story of their dice throwing; each one protested that he had not mentioned a syllable of it. They then agreed unanimously that someone who knew them must have been watching at that time. They carried away from that beautiful wedding the unpleasant consciousness that they were entering into their married state afflicted by a rumour. When the first train had to be boarded and the sisters, Setti and Netti, entered their own lives for the first time, a sad, almost ominous, frame of mind fell upon them. They threw their arms around each other's neck and wept. They were scarcely able to compose themselves so they sobbed.

In the meantime those in the wedding garden were unaware of all that had been going on—that the tramps' skit had had a significance which had been revealed to the twins. The guests had taken it as a harmless wedding joke and had laughed at it. People only wondered who the two fellows were.

Because of the many younger girls another dance was arranged, and when around midnight Salander's chartered train again took away that portion of the guests who had come from Münsterburg, full of singing and music, house and orchard remained behind all lighted up in the beautiful June night.

CHAPTER 12

IN ADDITION to the gossip caused by turning the wedding celebration into a political gathering, Martin Salander was vexed anew by his son's letter; he had wanted to answer his son's blasé sagacity, as he called it, by a progressive action—no matter how verbose it turned out to be in its execution.

A new consequence now appeared, one he had not thought of. In the region where the festivities had taken place a member of the Cantonal Council announced his resignation, in the middle of his term, because of domestic difficulties and had to be replaced through a new election. While they were looking around for a man the people thought of Salander, the friend of the people; and since he had already declined once they sent a few men to him who were supposed to persuade him to accept the call. Although taken unaware he asked for a short time in which to think it over, no matter how urgently they needed him; he was sincerely inclined to reconsider whether or not he should take that step and to consider its significance, especially as it would affect him personally.

Martin did not belong to those advocating the liberation and the granting of equal rights to the feminine sex, as far as their civil existence was concerned, and regardless of how highly he esteemed her he never expressly asked his own wife for her counsel and opinion on public matters. He maintained his point of view in such a manner. All the more he enjoyed the influence which she wielded whenever he talked of almost everything that moved him; to be sure his talking was mostly in the form of thinking aloud in her presence at morning coffee, at the table, at bed-time or while taking a walk. She then had the choice of taking up an arbitrary topic and of expressing her emotional position over protests, or even being completely silent on the matter. In the latter case he assumed the matter to be indifferent to her and allowed the monologue to fade gradually away. However, if she expressed herself, or agreed with him, or rebuked him, especially over personalities, then he again had the choice

of using what to him seemed clever or true or of discarding whatever seemed to have originated in faulty thinking or in a lack of insight. In this way he did not deprive himself of the resources which resulted from the soul of an upright woman and he gave her honour where honour was due.

Talking things over with his wife, first of all imparting to her the summons which he had received and adding something inconsequential, he thus began utilising the time for reflection granted to him. Then he went away, returning at the first opportunity and with long strides began pacing to and fro in the room—by this time presenting a series of opinions.

‘Until now,’ allowing himself to be heard piecemeal, ‘I’ve assisted in various ways and done things without any responsibility except towards my own conscience and, in reality, without concerted effort. Now that would be changed. I cannot, if I want to be of use there, enter into the council merely in order to sit quietly on the bench and either rise or remain seated during the voting. Also, if I want to speak I cannot chatter the whole day but must study the documents and speak authentically, that’s the only honest eloquence and it creates the influence! Knowledge is power! Good, I’ll do that! Then I’ll serve on committees and commissions and if I do that again, they’ll hang the reports on my back and I can sit down and write half the night through like a clerk.’

Here Frau Marie interrupted him, or rather took advantage of one of his short pauses which he frequently made.

‘Do you think you understand all of the documents so well,’ she said, ‘or what they concern, that you can write and talk about them?’

‘That’s why I just said,’ replied Martin without standing still, ‘that I must study them!’ Yet after several further strides he stopped in front of his wife who was sitting at the table peeling the last of last year’s apples, for she said that the maid cut around the scarce fruit in such a manner that hardly anything remained.

‘But,’ he continued, ‘you certainly didn’t mean what people call scrutinizing but what is generally understood as their having learned something. To be sure, that may not be examined too closely; the Cantonal Council should not be a university. On the contrary, it concerns things which aren’t known from the ground

up; it is a question of not wanting to talk of things which are not known thoroughly, however, and of keeping an eye on the experts and of acting according to them or of conforming to their views as far as they seem honest.'

'In such cases it is better'—here he again set his feet in motion—'to study the people rather than the documents, as for example, when two equally esteemed experts express opposite views on expensive river regulations, or on constructing and furnishing a state insane asylum or over a law concerning contagious diseases. Under these conditions I would not accept a place on a committee whose task it is to approve bills, but would limit myself to voting like any other man, depending upon the quiet impression which I had received—and still I could vote incorrectly!' he added with a sigh. 'Now these are the questions: does the good which one thinks capable of being performed surpass that which it is impossible to accomplish so considerably that it is worthwhile; and, what do I have to offer?'

He enumerated his talents which he felt confident of utilising or of acquiring in, above all, educational matters, finances and political economy and in the development and supervision of the people's rights—that they work decently—and of more such things. But since his wife did not ask about nor comment on anything else he allowed the broken-off sentence to die away finally and, after looking at the clock, rushed off.

He allowed another day to pass and then wrote to the people in that district, saying that he would accept the candidacy.

With the best of intentions he looked forward to the new period of his life. After he had been elected by a great majority at the ensuing election, he immediately impressed upon his mind the order of business and such matters as were connected with it in the constitution and in other laws. He then had bound a pocket note book on whose first page he appropriately and tidily wrote abstracts of the state's computations for the yearly estimates of income and expenses, etc., so that on his person he carried the main figures from all the territories of the state administration, and at any minute he could consult his notes as to the financial status of the nation.

This done, from the printed reports of the last session he tried to acquaint himself with the state of business of the Cantonal Council—over unsettled proposals, postulates and motions,

pigeon-holed drafts of bills, delinquent reports and propositions of the administration and the like, for which he established a compact row of notes in other regions of the notebook which had enough room for expansion.

He did not do that, so he remarked to his wife, in order to establish himself as a nagging busy-body, but, on the contrary, to avoid superfluous inquiries and to be able to give himself an account of where matters stood.

In this way tolerably well equipped, so he thought, in order not to appear too much of a novice considering his age and political reputation, he entered the chambers and, without searching, took the first seat that was empty, not quitting it anymore before the close of the session. Without diverting his attention, he followed the discussion the whole time and scarcely threw a single glance at the newspaper which neighbours thrust at him. His behaviour was considered proper and, to be sure, a matter of course according to the oath of office which he had taken and, as well, according to the prayer with which every session was opened and which formed a part of the legal order of business; however, few religious or irreligious people took the list of divine duties strictly literally. On the other hand, Martin Salander, who although not religiously minded, nevertheless considered himself as being bound to them, since the oath and prayer, comprising rules, were correct and necessary and their liturgical form could not cancel their legal power.

Not until after the session was concluded did he find the opportunity to greet his sons-in-law, whose frequent comings and goings he had not even noticed, especially since they had appeared a good half hour after him. The invitation which he extended to them to come home with him was refused with thanks because one of them was meeting with his colleagues in order to have a discussion, and the other had to take care of some business. Afterwards they wanted to hunt up a gun shop together in order to buy two new target guns because, for some time already, they had been members of a rifle club.

So Martin Salander went towards home alone. Lost in thought and feeling satisfied with himself—like one who has worked through an entire long morning, although he had done nothing and had not spoken a word—he strode homeward. Merely the incessant attention which he had devoted to the discussion for

five hours gave him the sense of having accomplished some work. He would not have imagined that there could be such a difference between presence and presence and, reflecting how he, too, would soon have timely things to say, he felt a hearty appetite for his delayed midday meal.

Frau Marie, who recognised him by the way the bell rang, met him in the entrance hall and warned him of a strange visitor—his predecessor in the Cantonal Council whose place he had taken today. That man seemed to be in a bad situation, and obviously he would not be offended if he were asked to stay and eat with them; she, however, had not wanted to invite him before Salander had seen him.

‘What does he want?’ Martin asked. ‘I used to meet him here and there, and I remember that he’s a good, intelligent man. But I can’t imagine what he wants!’

‘He says that he’s heard quite a bit about you and of the famous wedding; he’s pleased that he could have vacated his position in favour of such a successor and, because of that, he feels relieved and has come to tell you that and to wish you luck now that you’ve been elected.’

‘The poor devil! Just lay another place at table, our sons-in-law haven’t come along with me!’

When Salander entered the room he scarcely recognised the man who modestly sat on a chair at the window and who then stood up, and with an eloquence which had become uncertain greeted him and extended his words of congratulation. He had wanted, he said, to draw a little daily allowance on the treasury but, unfortunately, instead of receiving anything he had been obliged to continue depositing fines which he had been assessed for missing meetings. Then he had thought that he would not want to have made the journey completely in vain, and so at least he would pay his respects to his worthy successor.

‘But Mr. Kleinpeter!’ Martin Salander answered him, smilingly, ‘it seems to me that there’s not much to congratulate about if one loses money. Have you already eaten, or may I, perhaps, invite you to share our simple food?’

Embarrassed, the man thanked him, though with a glance of betrayal at the table which was set. For that reason Salander repeated the invitation more emphatically and took his hat from his hand, putting it to one side.

The man, who obviously had been handsome at one time, showed all signs of decay. The earlier corpulence had disappeared so his clothes had become too big and hung loosely on him, and at the same time were so worn out that it must have been a long time ago since he had had some made. His linens were in disorder and the tattered scarf was so poorly tied that one could really imagine seeing the loveless and lazy hands which allowed him to leave the house in that condition. His own hands clung, as was their custom, to various places on the coat lapels in order to cover a threadbare spot, a stain or a torn buttonhole. His pitiful manner which clung to him through all this was matched also by his colourless, bloated face whose features betrayed the traces of dejection and sorrow, as well as of spending countless attempts to lose himself in liquor.

The Salanders urged the visibly exhausted Kleinpeter to enjoy his meal; Frau Marie personally served him; nevertheless, he was soon filled, or else was not able to eat very much. On the other hand, instinctively he partook freely of the glass which Martin punctually filled and through it became almost alert and confiding. Noticing this, Martin personally went down to the cellar in order to select a few better bottles since the idea of celebrating the day of his inauguration into the town hall of Münsterburg through such charity to the impoverished man came to him. Meanwhile, his wife produced clean glasses, conversing genially with their guest since she also felt a strange pity for him, and she hoped that perhaps she might avert his fate or some other disaster from her Martin by showing herself to be humane towards this man's misfortune.

To the more and more talkative Mr. Kleinpeter Salander spoke a little of council affairs and thought of asking him questions of this and that point of view which he had taken; but although it had been less than six months that the man had failed to attend meetings, it seemed to him that everything behind him was like a dream. He scarcely remembered the things, and he answered the questions indifferently and incorrectly while his face again began to cloud up.

Salander immediately uncorked one of the bottles which his wife took and filled two glasses with wine, whose delightful fragrance circulated and summoned the little autumn sun back to his visitor's face. The peaceful attentive character of this married

couple, the deep contentment which seemed to rule between the two and the nerve enlightening wine allowed him to forget every misfortune and made his heart joyful, so that he sat there with swimming eyes and rosy cheeks and of his own free will began to relate old drolleries and stories of the life of a rural official until the first of the fine bottles was finished. While Salander made the second one ready, and his guest looked on with joyful attention, Frau Marie utilised the pause to ask him how many of his family was still at home and whether all were well.

At that the man stared at her as if awakened from a sweet sleep; the blissful flush from the wine withdrew towards his eyes which already were aglow; his head, propped up by his hands, he allowed to sink and presently he cried like a child. Astonished and frightened, Martin and Marie Salander viewed the incident and the greying head trembling terribly before them. They stood up in order to look after the sobbing guest and to comfort him. They succeeded at last, although he still stood before them ashamed; he excused himself because of the morbid fit, as he expressed it, and wanted to leave.

But Salander could well see that he was not really suffering from 'drunkard's misery,' as the crying of drunks is customarily called, but that the sudden recollection of an unhappy life had overpowered the councillor and had caused his loss of self-control. Accordingly, in a friendly manner he urged him to sit down and to recover his composure.

'Make some good black coffee for us,' Martin said to his wife. 'Afterward the other bottle will taste so much better, for Mr. Kleinpeter will still have to help drink it!'

Mrs. Salander prepared the coffee carefully and saw to it that it did not lack a small glass of old *Kirsch*.

It was not long until the heaviness of heart of the new guest once more retired and relinquished the field to the happier mood which did not wish to miss the unexpected well-being by its absence. Kleinpeter again became so talkative and open-hearted that he himself, with pacified mind, returned to the source of the convulsive tear-shedding. One word led to the next, and then encountering a sympathetic attention perhaps for the first time, this being related unabashedly and candidly what his situation was. Within an hour Martin and Marie Salander, in proportion to their understanding, knew his history fairly well.

Kleinpeter, the old Supreme Council member, had been a small manufacturer of cottons, continuing the business which he had taken over with some funds from his father, without any considerable improvement but also without retreating. An affable and popular man, he placed more worth upon social and civic connections than upon the acquisition of riches. A frivolous empty-headed woman whom he had married stimulated him in the latter direction, for she had attributed the modest esteem which he enjoyed solely to her own merit, and strutted around like a peacock. Everything that he did was because of *her* virtue; everything that was pleasing in his personality was because of *her* personal excellence; whatever happened to him was because of *her* merit. It was *her* husband of whom one spoke and of whom she boasted and nothing else; anywhere he wanted to go there she also wanted to be; she also travelled around the countryside alone, as often as she was able, in order to let herself be seen and to boast. At home, however, she made life bitter for him by the contemptuous manner in which she actually endeavoured to govern his actions so that he, indeed, would never dare to stand up against her. In other respects also he was miserable in his house, because everything that resembled effort was too much for her. Two growing sons took after her.

Just then no more suitable person stood in the way of Kleinpeter, and when he was elected a member of the Cantonal Council, and soon afterward as its chairman, the conceit of the woman rose to the highest peak; titles seemed to exist only for her and everyone would have been ill-advised, indeed, not to have addressed her with one or the other. And while she begrudged that poor fellow and almost hated him because, after all, he was the true possessor of the titles, she used them to exploit the esteem connected with them in order to make debts and to carry on other mischief.

In this she found sufficient aid as soon as her sons took over the administration of the modest factory which the father had turned over to them in order to devote himself exclusively to his elected office and to have peace. In that he deceived himself tremendously.

From the time they had left school the sons could not be made to get out and see and learn something of the world; the father was to be blamed for this also because he did not force them to

do it and allowed them to loaf around the house where they became rough at heart and assumed, for example, only the coarseness and uncouth manners of their mother and of a number of fellows of the same ilk. Instead of conducting the business in an orderly manner they neglected it and fell into scandalous speculation without receiving any returns. Then they always dragged in their father who had to vouch for them or even had to put his name on the notes; Mrs. Chairman and Cantonal Councillor, moreover, did not hesitate to approach him with promissory notes for his signature. These bills of exchange and obligations which were co-signed by him were accepted for a long time and after lengthy circumlocutions returned to him alone and had to be redeemed by him with bitter troubles and a thousand worries.

All that took place accompanied by continuous nagging and quarrels, since mother and sons behaved more and more insolently and rudely towards him, as though he were a bad provider. To hide this distress and to quiet the noise which daily threatened to break out, he always had to yield for the sake of his station. He had removed his office, together with a little bedroom, to a smaller neighbouring building in order to find peace. But this did not trouble her. She came during the audiences which he held or during the hearings which he conducted, rushing through the office, opening and slamming doors violently if she could not speak to him. Employing quite stupid falsehoods and disloyalties she even tried to turn the secretary, the policeman and the office courier into adversaries of her husband who, after all, despite all his weakness, remained the supporter of the household until the final collapse.

And there was no one who heard him complain. But he certainly knew why he kept silent; no one would have believed that a human being who in his own home played so miserable a role could dare counsel the welfare of the country and govern strangers.

But as everything human comes to an end this great wrong and suffering also approached its hour of rest. Because of wages due to them, the workers in the factory stayed away and were employed elsewhere. In spite of this the sons still had made considerable purchases of raw material; upon delivery, however, they immediately pawned it, and when the day of payment came they possessed neither yarn nor goods nor money and were in

danger of being suspected of fraudulent bankruptcy. Early in the morning on the day that the notes were due and were to be presented for payment the sons approached their father with this pleasant revelation, naturally again in tones of reproach, saying that he had put them into such a miserable little factory. And when he stood there, helpless, and asked where in heaven's name he should obtain the money since, indeed, everything was pawned and covered with debts, they impudently pointed to the tax monies which he had collected and which conveniently lay ready and could, for the moment, be claimed without danger.

The father became pale.

'There are regulations as to exactly how much money I may keep in my house and when I have to carry it to the treasury, quite aside from the fact that I do not, in any way, lend my hand to any deal of that nature!'

'Then we'll declare the business bankrupt tomorrow!' they said. 'You know the firm is called Kleinpeter and Sons!'

They looked around the room towards the old cash box; what had become of it? Not long ago the father had dragged it into another corner and had screwed it tightly to the floor under which was located a heavy joist. Just now the box stood open, its iron cover pushed back; in a compartment lay a roll of money, which had been counted, together with a package of banknotes and up above a piece of paper with the respective totals on it. The older son promptly strode towards the open box and while he spoke seized the memorandum:

'There's more than enough here for the moment! A quarter of it is more than enough, and later there'll be ways and means of paying it back!'

As he said this he reached towards the banknotes. But the council chairman rushed between his son and the money and held the son's arm fast; the second son sprang forward to help his brother, and in mortal terror the old man struggled with his sons who did not shrink from pushing their father to and fro.

But finally he succeeded in laying hold of the heavy cover and slammed it shut; whereupon the robber-like sons retreated a little but did not appear as if they wanted to desist from their intention. He utilised that moment in taking the key away from the lock.

'If you don't go this minute and never allow yourselves to be seen here again,' he said to them with a quivering yet subdued

voice, 'then my own guard will take you into custody and escort you to Münsterburg in handcuffs! He'll be here any minute!'

The unexpected strength of the weak man who would fight for his last possession—his honest name—made the ne'er-do-well sons shrink and withdraw, just as pale as their father had become.

Trembling and panting, the chairman sat on the iron box and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. With confused thoughts, he looked sideways at the obsolete lock work on the old heirloom without seeing it. Finally, after he had collected himself somewhat, with weary legs he arose, opened the box again and took out the tax money to wrap it up. He gathered together the necessary paper, string, and sealing wax and with great haste and speed wrapped and tied it tight with double and triple knots, yet it was clumsily done for it was work befitting a janitor. At last he lit the candle and sealed the package at three or four places, each time viewing the seal with a groan before he pressed it on.

He wrote a short report relating to the delivery, furnished a special envelope and addressed it; then he sent the sergeant, who was just entering, to the post office with both pieces, enjoining him not to tarry at any place whatsoever and to see to it that both the money and the letter should leave the post office at the first opportunity; then too, he should not forget to bring back a post office receipt. He gazed through the window after the man and was just able to see his wife stopping him in the courtyard and wanting to see what he was carrying away, and how shortly the sergeant left the woman standing.

Then in two additional notes, one to the president of the Cantonal Council and one to the government, he resigned his positions as a member of the council and as council chairman; he knew that it was all over now, although he did not know what would become of him.

He allowed the empty iron box to remain standing open. His wife shuffled in and immediately looked inside, but it seemed to her that a cold wind blew from the empty cavity so she pulled her nose back quickly and questioningly looked at her husband as if to ask what was going on. However, he gave her no information but turned towards the gendarme who had appeared. The council chairman had announced the previous evening that this

gendarme would be ordered to go to the capitol on business and had made the necessary papers ready. He handed these over to him now, together with both letters of resignation which he commanded him to take care of punctually.

So he had placed his house in order and possessed nothing more than this surety bond consisting of some stock that could be used after his resignation, and which had been deposited but probably since had disappeared.

As the outpouring from Kleinpeter's heart gradually began to dry up, a silence of minutes in length prevailed in which Martin and Marie Salander allowed the shocking impression to take effect; Kleinpeter, while not regretting his confidence, silently enjoyed the visible sympathy as well as some belated sips of the fragrant wine.

Martin considered with horror what gloomy situations could lie hidden in the life of a trusted public servant, or also could exist as an open secret. He knew that single appearances of this kind have occurred at all times, and they, to be sure, were regarded then as great disasters. But now a presentiment attempted to creep upon him as if it were a symptom, which, fortunately, a counter-thought consolingly cancelled. He was filled with true respect because of the quick decisiveness with which the council chairman considered himself as no longer fit for his office and had resigned his posts for the sole reason that his sons had thought him capable of the trespass of disloyalty, and even had wanted to commit it themselves. And when the thought occurred to him that the apparently weak man not only had wanted to atone for the baseness of his sons but also had wanted to prevent falling into the snares of growing need, this respect diminished not at all. No, said Salander to himself, when the unsteady man is able to raise himself by means of true civic-mindedness and save his self-respect, the community is not in the decline!

Frau Marie thought of other things; she was concerned with the strange wife whom her husband depicted with bitter resentment and without any remaining affection. She did not doubt a moment that she herself was the source of his misfortune, but she did not quite understand the character of the monster.

'I don't understand, Mr. Kleinpeter,' she began to speak, 'how a wife could be so conceited over her husband's reputation and could use it in any manner while she begrudged him of it, and

hated him because of this to such an extent that she actually exerted herself to deny him the respect which was his due.'

'Well, Mrs. Salander,' announced the one-time chairman, 'I haven't studied the problem. Those who experience the situation personally understand it, so to speak, without being able to explain it clearly. Everything else considered, I think a high-grade selfishness connected with a certain mental limitation and vanity has a part in it and, furthermore, the background has made itself felt. My wife comes from a region where, speaking in all due respect, the women are especially known as being high-flown, conceited and great slanderers. Neighbourly envy and craving gossip afflict whole villages and disrupt large families as well as the humble cottage dwellers. Each one who marries resolves to show where she came from and to maintain the upper hand. The men are active but uncouth and, in the lower levels of society, curse like pirates in and outside of the house. Then too, the women exercise their tongues from girlhood on, and if one of them is not clever enough in that respect, one can imagine what comes out!'

'How then did you blunder into this Promised Land?' asked Frau Marie.

'A good friend told me that he knew someone I ought to marry. "Where is she," I asked in an off-handed manner, which at that time was, for young country lions, the customary manner of speaking. He gave me her name and where I could find her, and he extolled all her merits. I found a fine looking, well-dressed daughter who knew how to behave in such a friendly manner and so gently that I bit at once, although I had been informed by an unknown source that she herself had sent that man to me. Instead of frightening me away by these means I felt rather flattered and was completely touched. She revealed herself quickly and terribly. Nevertheless, she also is still an exception among the women of her village since she is more gross than the others, in a certain sense a concentration.'

In the middle of his speech he had to laugh because her latest prank came to his mind. Threatening divorce she had concluded a long squabble over his impoverishment; whereupon he merely had observed that at any rate she would then find the opportunity to cast aside at last the titles of Mrs. Council Chairman and Mrs. Cantonal Councillor which were no longer suitable. Then fiery-

red and furious, she had leaped at him and shouted that it did not occur to her to resign; she possessed the God-given right to allow herself to be called that for life and she would not yield in that matter!

On the question as to what she had done with all the money that she had had and to be driven to issue promissory notes, he answered:

'She spent it for clothes and finery. Since I held the highest office in the district she thought it her duty to dress the finest of them all and, indeed, that was not inexpensively since there were several large manufacturers whose wives usually lived in great style. Only a year ago I had to pay a little bill for one hundred and twenty francs which she had incurred—and for what? For a little parasol with an ivory rod and covered with an expensive fabric. She had seen it displayed here in a store where she was known and she immediately bought it in the manner which I have related. With this parasol she paraded through the whole town, and farther around wherever she thought she could irritate the more wealthy women and young girls. Then because of the little parasol she especially went to the spas for several weeks and there again signed a note against me. In addition to this, again and again she received money from her well-to-do parents, who are still living, with the assertion that I needed it. When it was finally revealed that she had lied, she didn't receive any more by this means.'

The good man would have gossiped still longer if the time for his return trip home had not come, but the grievous circumstances did not allow him to give up his return ticket on the train. Besides, he rejoiced in being able to sleep in peace in his old home for a short time; Frau Council Chairman with her entire wardrobe and parasol had gone yesterday to her parents; two weeks ago the sons had started out for America in order to find jobs as factory foremen, who were being imported willingly from Switzerland. Indeed, but not such a kind! If only they had gone sooner! His factory together with the entire old property was in receivership and each day awaited the auction. Fortunately the affair was no longer of interest to him.

'Couldn't you,' asked Salander, 'retake the property if you were to find a partner and start it in operation again?'

'I certainly will not, Mr. Councillor!' answered Kleinpeter

without deliberation. 'If I really were to succeed, then some day all three would again be here to lap up the milk. I'd rather take over a quiet, modest business whatever it may be; if you could propose something that would be appropriate then, perhaps, give me a hint if you would be so kind.'

'I'll certainly think about it, be assured of that!' Martin Salander promised him and offered his hand. 'You're still a brave man and you're not old, only pull yourself together a little. Farewell; I hope you arrive home safely.'

'Thank you a thousand times; you too, Mrs. Salander, for the food and drink and for being so very kind.'

'That was nothing; it was a pleasure!' said Frau Marie, shaking him by the hand. 'I want to wish you a happy trip home and hope that life will again be more pleasant for you.'

With unexpectedly swift strides the comforted man hurried from them. Pensively, the couple gazed after him as he proceeded down the street.

'He doesn't sway at all!' observed Marie, 'I was worried that he would get a little tipsy. There still should be help for him if he were rid of that fine female.'

'And if he has a quiet spot away from the wind then I also believe that he can still recover, but he should no longer want to be in politics.'

On the way to his office, which he still visited, the new Cantonal Council member pondered over the strange experience of his first day, of his recent official duties—how it had come about that he had to entertain and console his predecessor who had failed—and he considered himself lucky that in his pleasant household such dangers were not in evidence. Nevertheless, from the uncertainty of human affairs in the highest offices which he had perceived so immediately he retained a melancholy impression.

CHAPTER 13

IN THE COURSE OF TIME Martin Salander became a very busy man both within the council and outside of it, and because everybody wanted him to be on their side, the shifting of political activity and the cross currents of demands made it seem to him as if he were living in a whirlwind.

The fight revolved mainly around the question of whether or not the newest Swiss people's government, yielding to the pressure of social upheaval, should relinquish its rights and prerogatives—that is, whether or not the government could pretend to the people that its actions had always been directed towards their desires. With this question a slight shifting and changing of party lines came about while the people as a whole, considering them as a strange gloomy entity, were silent.

Salander, however, followed the middle path which consisted of rejecting the contact with the social upheaval, nationalising all kinds of things, and in easing and improving the situation in its old form; thus he accepted the point of view which only a few short years ago he had fought but which its former adherents already were quite ready to surrender as an obsolete one.

Meanwhile, as payment on account as well as wholesome experience, the former adherents accepted everything offered to them. In the communities and out across the country the same wind blew everywhere; expenses were decided upon for welfare or cultural purposes and Martin Salander was working tirelessly with the others to bring new inventions into circulation.

Sometimes his sons-in-law acted as adjutants for him by introducing the ideas for which he stood and which immediately seemed to be indispensable among the people of every community to which they came—even when nobody else thought of a new public handout or public charity.

Marie was downright edified by the good spirit with which Martin participated in his activities. One day she found in one of his discarded coats the notebook containing the budget and abstracts of state bills.

'Haven't you missed this book?' she asked, showing it to him. 'It was hidden in your old black coat which you haven't worn any more for a year.'

Salander looked at it.

'Hm! Really, I haven't missed it! It's not as necessary for me any more; in the first place these things are now more familiar to me, and shortly a displacement must take place. Displacement! Actually that's a bad word those under-handed Socialists use whenever they're ashamed and want to point out what they are peaceably striving towards. That such a shift of position will take place is not to be doubted and is only a question of time.'

'But what do *you* mean by that word?'

'I? Look, approximately I mean this. Because of the imperative advances of the times the expenditures grow so much at every point that the receipts don't cover them anymore; if, for example, the communities want to complete properly the tasks entrusted to them, then they would be too heavily burdened, and the state, that is to say the canton, must hasten to meet the increased demands. Not being able to increase the taxes indefinitely it has to turn to the confederation which will have to accommodate itself to considerable contributions if it wants to fulfil its higher duties. On the other hand, the revenues of the confederacy are not inexhaustible, and, at the same time, it increases its own fixed expenditures. So we have to try to open new sources and to procure new funds which are needed for all that.'

'Why, that's obviously "Ring Around the Rosy"! ' laughed Marie; 'that's very funny and, as I understand it, is cunning at the same time. Or else we're acting like the man who moves his purse from one pocket to another the whole day long so he can imagine he has a hundred purses and can buy whatever he wants. Isn't that so?'

'Not quite, my love! I can't explain it more thoroughly now, these are just national economic matters. It's called National Economics.'

But his favourite field was public education—to him it meant the true home in which he had to make good his earlier defection from the school. In his holy ardour he unknowingly imitated the Jewish shop-keepers who, to assure themselves a reasonable price, overcharged the haggling public. But the ideal towards

which he worked was so well established in his mind that he still believed in his ability to attain his lofty goal. He devoted his attention to each of his incessantly appearing whims, helped to shape them, form them into an acceptable idea, and then with all the influence at his disposal advocated them to the appropriate committees on which he sat, to clubs, and, at any opportunity, to the Cantonal Council.

'I hope to live to see,' he said one day to his wife, 'that not one of our youngsters in the city or in the country will leave the schools before he is twenty years of age.'

'What should they do all that time?'

'Learn and continue learning! Practise and practise again and consider only how laboriously the matter accumulates. When we've succeeded in having the daily attendance at school extended to the age of fifteen and have introduced a common curriculum on the secondary level, not until then does higher learning begin in the fields of mathematics, composition, in knowledge of animal bodies and hygiene and an increased knowledge of Swiss geography and history. Continuous training in gymnastic and military exercises is already prescribed but must become better managed; target practice especially must be started earlier and occur more frequently. Of course, side by side with the above the continued nourishment of poetry and music is carried on—the latter to an extent that enough boys are found in a community who are gifted in the playing of wind instruments, the conveyors of contemporary folk music——'

'Thank God, this pleases me best of all,' Marie immediately interrupted the speech of her husband and his promenade around the room. Asking her, 'Why so?' he remained standing there.

'Why, with the knowledge of human bodies and the regular cultivation of health, if you've first turned the entire population into one, single hypochondriac then the people can again be gradually cheered up by our folk music. Thus it becomes the democratization of art which you, do you remember, had spoken of at the wedding of our children. It can then assert its influence more and more charitably. But continue!'

'I'm almost finished! As the young men near their twentieth year, approximately at the age of eighteen, they will be schooled in citizenship. As things now stand the system of government is

taught them superficially in school when they're boys, and when they leave school they have already forgotten half of what they had learned. It, therefore, is being rejuvenated once more and, in conclusion, the whole cycle of law-giving is being opened to their understanding shortly before they enter into the obligations and benefits of civic rights. I had thought that those would be enough subjects with which to fill up the time! It certainly would be difficult in the beginning to proceed evenly and persistently; it will have to succeed, however, if the laws themselves are not to become ironies. I've forgotten that besides all this each young lad shall learn to build a simple table or bench and that facilities will have to be provided for this.'

'That's fine, it will subdue those presumptions of our "uppity" guilds. "An axe in the house keeps away the carpenter"!' observed Frau Marie.

Martin made just as quizzical a face as his wife had made for he did not know how his wife's statement was intended, since that group of craftsmen named by her was just now in difficulties.

'My lecture doesn't seem to have your approval,' Martin said, once more standing before her, 'there's too much in it as far as you're concerned; isn't that right?'

With a serious expression and trying to look up to him she answered: 'No dear, on the contrary! To me there's something rather important lacking in the programme but which, perhaps, does not belong in it and is being withheld for a later decision. It could not be forgotten or overlooked.'

'What would that be? Perhaps a compulsory cooking school to be paid for by the state and community? But that belongs in the girls' curriculum—that's also being taken into consideration. Doubtless you'll be called onto the respective women's commission and, as my wife, you could not very well ignore it.'

'I don't mean all that! I mean that terrible campaign which the Swiss will have to undertake in Asia or Africa in order to get an army of working slaves or to conquer a land which will provide them. For without importing slaves who should help the poorer peasants perform the work in the fields? Who would feed those students? Or do you want to pay them wages until they're twenty years old and they understand everything—except how to work, save for building a table and bench?'

'But Marie! What do you mean?' asked Martin, with a blush

spreading over his forehead; 'you're answering my respectful confidence with pure satire today—and of the bitterest kind.'

'Forgive me, Martin. I'm not bitter at heart; I know how you're disposed towards everything. I'm only a little sad because I also know that you're heading for a great disillusionment, and at our age we can't take that as lightly as we did years ago.'

'At our age? Why should we be old if we don't want to be? And as for the delusions, they're as painful as brightly-coloured soap bubbles which burst on our noses.'

He said this more in jest than to change the tone of his wife which had become serious and had made him uncomfortable. Among the countless opponents of that vast educational programme not one single man had dared to speak his mind in the way that she had.

'Let's forget about these stories which don't make you happy,' he began again, 'and talk about the children whose wedding you mentioned a short time ago. I've wanted to ask you once before already why we don't see the young women anymore. Or has one or the other come during my absence? After they were first married they sometimes met at our house whenever they accompanied their husbands to the city, but that hasn't happened for a long time now.'

Marie Salander became still more serious than she had been, but said only:

'I don't know what's the matter, it strikes me too. For a long time now there isn't too much to be learned from their brief notes; they no longer confide in me. I thought you might know more of them since you do business with our sons-in-law, who allow themselves to be seen here even less.'

'That's also stopped. I've trusted them, availed myself of their services in their districts, but when I sensed that they made too much nonsense about it and, particularly, took advantage of every insignificant matter as an excuse for a trip or entertainment, as their father-in-law I considered it my duty to discontinue this kind of connection—without causing unfavourable feelings, by the way, for they're still youngsters.'

Mrs. Salander sighed first a little before she said that she still knew something more than he did, although nothing concrete; and she did not want to hold it back any longer. And so she continued:

'For six months neither Setti nor Netti have been here, I've heard from a good source that they haven't seen each other for more than a year and that they even seem to avoid each other as best they can; yet early in their marriage they visited each other once a week, once at Lautenspiel and once at Lindenberg. What is this now? What's happened? I don't know, and no one seems to want to know.'

'Perhaps it's childishness,' said Salander, to some extent struck with surprise, 'perhaps more.' After a minute of reflection he added, 'Possibly the twin-craze with which they were obsessed has changed into another idea or even has begotten an offspring since they themselves have no children yet.'

'And in the end, perhaps,' replied his wife, 'it would be fortunate if they really would not have any children. I get premonitions as if something were not right and the children do not dare to confide in us, especially with me because they have only followed their own wills.'

'In that event, we should try to get at the bottom of it and attempt to help them.'

'I've already thought of that, but how could we do that without doing more harm than good?'

'I believe that the simplest thing would be to surprise them both some beautiful day with our visit, which we owe the young people anyway—we were at their places only once. If the weather were good we could go to Unterlaub on the morning train, walk out to Setti's and stop there one or two hours; we could, to begin with, take note of approximately how things stand and if something is to be discovered. Then we'll go over to Lindenberg in a coach on the *Kreuzbahn*, inviting Setti to come to Netti's with us. We'll see if she does this or what she says and what will happen further. And in the evening we'll be home again.'

This proposal was more acceptable to Mrs. Salander than she let it be seen, since her worry also was deeper. Because of this they postponed the trip no longer. On one of the following days they journeyed to Unterlaub and went on foot to the so-called Lautenspiel. As they caught sight of the lovely setting in the thin grove of young beeches which surrounded half of the house, and which echoed and re-echoed with the warbling of finches, Martin Salander said with renewed delight:

'It wouldn't be natural for some serious disaster to thrive in

this idyllic peace! Look how cleanly the gravel is raked everywhere, and the grove is also in the neatest possible condition and up above, on the left, a great abundance of tree-tops in the true forest can be seen marching up the mountain slope.'

'Yes, it's beautiful here,' answered Frau Marie, 'perhaps only too beautiful for idle hearts.'

They went around the house where, at the back door as at the front, a few small orange trees had been planted in old pails. Alongside one of the little trees stood Mrs. Setti Weidelich in a fine dress, busying herself by plucking off the wilted leaves. In profile her face seemed thinner than it had been earlier, more pale and, above all, joyless.

'Look!' Marie Salander whispered to her husband, touching his arm.

He stood still momentarily looking at his daughter, then went towards her all the faster. Setti heard his steps grinding in the gravel and turned around. She scarcely caught sight of her father and mother before the joy to which she was not accustomed radiated from her face, breaking through a veil of melancholy which immediately wanted to spread over it. But rather hesitatingly she went over to meet them until she saw that her parents had accelerated their speed, and now she rushed into their arms.

'Do we have to hunt you out if we want to see you occasionally,' they asked, 'and Netti too? What kind of behaviour is this?'

Setti blushed profusely and closed her eyes.

'I don't know; I don't get away from the house,' the embarrassed young woman replied, 'but haven't you seen Netti either?'

'As much as we've seen of you! What's the matter?' the mother asked.

'What should be the matter? Even accidental causes can be similar and may have the same consequences everywhere. But don't you want to come in the house and rest? I'm so very happy. That's why I dreamt so pleasantly last night!'

'Dreamt? What did you dream?' her father asked.

'I dreamt about myself when I was a small child and was wandering on the highway. I don't know where. On my arm I carried a little bag in which was an apple and a piece of bread.'

I was hungry and sat down on a stone but the bag was tied together so tightly with a complicated knot that I couldn't succeed in reaching the bread and I came to the verge of tears. Suddenly, just opposite me, I saw a house with a gorgeous garden in which music as well as a loud clatter of dishes and clinking of glassware could be heard; and, just imagine——! Into an open window stepped a man and woman with nosegays of flowers in their hands, and they were none other than Mr. and Mrs. Salander who were celebrating their wedding. You were young and very good-looking and saw that because I could not open my little bag I was crying, and so you called me. I came immediately and Father said: "Show us your little bag, we want to open it for you." You opened the knot and handed the bag over to Mother who reached inside and pulled out the little rainbow-coloured dish which she once showed us when we were children and were to go to bed unfed. But it was a regular gold dish or, rather, a plate! "My goodness!" both of you cried. "What's your name, little girl?" When I told you, you said that the name was not unfamiliar to you and that you wanted to adopt me for the sake of the beautiful plate. Then I had to sit at the table between you, was served such excellent crab soup on a golden plate that the tip of the nose of *Henricus Rex* scarcely glittered through it. The crab soup of which I dreamt clearly was connected with the crab's shell with which the tiny earth men were outfitted in Mother's *Märchen*. Strange to say, even though a child, sitting down I was as large as all the other people.'

Thus Setti, happy and contented, went clattering up the stairs. 'Dreams are mere shadows,' the father said, 'yours, however, ought to signify to you that at any time we'll adopt you again. Isn't that right, Marie?'

The mother only nodded and, since they entered the room just then, said:

'Where's your husband? May we go into his office to greet him?'

The daughter immediately became more serious and blushed once more while she replied that Isidor had gone into the village where he had business to perform and where he occasionally drank a glass of beer before lunch—especially if there were political matters at hand. He certainly would come soon; she would send the clerk after him to tell him who had come.

'Absolutely not! Don't disturb him!' the parents said in unison.

'Then I'll ask you to tell me what might please you at the moment—a glass of sweet wine, a cup of tea or boullion? There's also some chocolate.'

'If the beef tea is already strong enough give us a few spoonful of it; as you know, Father likes it best of all,' the mother decided; 'don't make a fuss over us, we don't want a feast! And don't make any extra preparations for lunch, do you hear? We're satisfied with anything.'

'Mother dear, I do have something sent to the house for my husband—a little piece of meat or a few fish from our fish pond—otherwise he'd be embarrassed. Please, let me order it.'

'Well, you'd know better about that,' Frau Marie answered, 'but say, for just staying at home you're dressed like a princess! Turn around—that's a Sunday dress! My heavens, what attire! And you didn't even expect visitors!'

Again Setti looked to one side as she reported that her husband wanted it thus, and for the sake of blessed peace she has to do it. Now she is used to it and scarcely knows that she is dressed beautifully.

Martin Salander asked whether her brother-in-law, Julian, also acted in the same manner; whereupon she answered:

'Certainly, its exactly the same and I don't believe that they even agreed upon it in advance!'

'What, those young whipper-snappers?' the mother interjected. 'Under these conditions do you use all of the interest on your modest dowry only for clothes?'

'I think that neither of us really knows what we need because our husbands keep everything in the fireproof safe in their offices; whatever is to be paid out comes from there.'

As soon as Setti left the room in order to take care of her duties her mother said to Mr. Salander:

'There we have the motherly-loving goddesses favourably influencing the youthful men.'

'I'm completely stupefied!' he rejoined, 'they're certainly damned tyrannical rascals. In that respect the girls have, as it appears, proved to be right—soon they will be men! At least they're up to their wives!'

When Setti returned the mother addressed her:

'After dinner we've planned to ride to Lindenberg in order to see your sister, Netti, too. We had figured on taking you along in order to have both of you two together. Can you get away? You could return in the evening.'

The daughter was visibly startled at this proposition and turned white. 'I don't know,' she said, 'if I could get away today. Isidor had talked about some business which he has to take care of in the afternoon somewhere. If no one is in the office then the clerk also slips away.'

'Then you have to watch the office?'

'At any rate the building; it's so remotely situated that I can't allow the maid to remain alone. Then too, to a certain extent I know the people who come here to ask about this or that. I can give instructions and occasionally I even work a little to pass the time when the office is empty, and I've already copied many a legal description of farms.'

All that sounded plausible except that she said it so timidly that a definite yearning to go along to Lindenberg was not to be misunderstood any longer. From this last remark the parents derived the suspicion that their daughter was being used to copy material. To them this seemed as improbable as if at other times she would have tolerated it. Enough! The mother did not wish to lose any more time. To get closer to the purpose of their excursion she seized the hand of the young woman and said with mild, yet penetrating words:

'Now tell us the truth why you don't want to come along! We've come for that reason and we want to find out what's happened between you two that you don't have anything to do with each other and don't allow yourselves to be seen at your old home. Why are you so depressed, so sad; why do you become flushed, then pale? Perhaps we'll find your sister in the same condition!'

'Just speak out, child, it has to be; we won't leave without having an explanation!' the father added.

Their daughter remained standing without bringing forth a single word. The parents themselves became embarrassed and did not know whether they should probe deeper or not. On this off-chance Salander at last said:

'Has the happiness which you awaited perhaps failed to appear, or has it already disappeared?'

'Yes, that's it!' answered Setti almost without any voice. She pulled her hand away from her mother's, looked for her handkerchief and covered her mouth and eyes while she tried to suppress a convulsive sobbing which had broken out. They allowed the poor girl to recover somewhat before they inquired further. Finally, of her own accord, she continued again:

'They're no good! They have no souls! O God, who could have thought that!'

'Who? You yourselves!' the mother said, wiping away the tears of angry compassion from her own eyes.

'We know it and we're ashamed of ourselves before our father and mother, not daring to think of our younger brother at all! But we also are mutually ashamed of each other and can't look at one another. As soon as we had discovered this terrible disillusionment we had to flee from each other like people who had committed a crime together. And yet I'm homesick for my sister and she certainly for me! But whenever we're together it's as if each would feel within herself two bad consciences!'

Martin and Marie Salander, side by side, excitedly walked up and down.

'For the moment this is enough! You must come with us, Setti; you two should again find your ways and then it will be better. Now wash your eyes because your husband may be coming at any moment now and we must not betray our feelings before we've considered everything and know what we ought to do!'

'There's nothing to be done!' Setti answered somewhat more composedly. 'It's just that, according to custom, in the eyes of the world we do not have a reason for a divorce.'

She went out of the room to follow her father's advice to cool off her face; immediately thereafter Isidor came storming in, discovering on the way what visitors he would find at home. He was very jovial and greeted his in-laws as if it were a very flattering surprise to him, but he immediately excused himself saying that he had to look in the office quickly; instead of going there, however, he went into the kitchen and dining-room in order to examine the food and the table and to discover whether his honour had been preserved and whether, in spite of the guests, his own appetite had been provided for.

No traces of what had gone on before were seen at the table.

Frau Setti seemed serenity itself, which was eased and increased through the presence of her parents and the confession offered to them. As a woman, the mother recognised from this complete peace and self-control how little the young man must have come to mean in the heart of his wife. She could bear him as one bears a sad fate brought on by one's self.

The father had to turn his attention more towards the notary and he wondered why the scales had not fallen away from his eyes sooner. Not one sensible word fell from his lips. The cunning young opportunist had position, house and wife and with them his personality already had come to an end and could assert itself only in the noise of its own ilk. In the silence of the house where the individual word grows in significance Isidor paled.

'We have in mind,' Salander imparted to the notary, 'also to visit the people at Lindenberg this afternoon and we want to take our daughter along. You've nothing against that have you, son? Of course, she told us that you also had something to do away from the office, but perhaps it could be arranged, for once, that both of you could be gone at the same time.'

'And why not, Father? I would have enjoyed going along too but I beg to be excused.'

Isidor was glad that he could go his way in good graces for the searching eyes of his taciturn mother-in-law disquieted him. When they left he accompanied his wife and her parents a short distance.

In the courtyard Salander again admired the little beech grove; rising upward in the rear where the undulating masses of the tree tops of the larger forest—a surrounding which money could not buy.

'Oh yes, it's pretty!' the son-in-law said. 'Only it won't remain standing as long in the future as it already has. The forest belongs to the village of Unterlaub and is to be cut down in a few years; the lumber men are already after it. Then I'll also throw in our beeches; it will all be done together and they'll bring in some good money!'

'Are you mad?' cried Salander. 'Your beeches protect the house and garden together with the meadow from the mud and rubble which the mountain will hurtle downward after it has been stripped of trees!'

'I don't care!' the youthful notary answered in a careless voice, 'then we'll move away and sell the whole humbug. It's monotonous to squat always in the same place.'

Salander thought his share but he gave no answer. During Isidor's part in the conversation Frau Setti allowed a few words of astonishment to be heard, thus betraying the fact that she still knew nothing of the imminent cutting of the wood which threw a new light upon her husband's ways. Therefore, she remained silent adding only: '*Adieu, beautiful Lautenspiel!*'

'How did this place get the name of Lautenspiel, anyway?' asked the mother who was joining them.

'The devil might be able to answer that, I can't ! In the deed books it states only: House and land called Lautenspiel, and just that way it's in my mortgage,' explained Isidor.

'But haven't you heard what is said in the neighbourhood about it?' asked Frau Setti.

'No, I've never asked about it. Where should it have come from? How should my old home have come to be known as the Finch, and what about the Red Man? From any sort of nonsense!'

'More than two hundred years ago,' Setti related, 'a covetous *Junker* is supposed to have dwelt here in order to hide his six beautiful daughters from the world so that they would not marry and he have to settle a dowry upon them. All six played the lute beautifully and accompanied the music with singing, but among them they possessed only three lutes. During fine weather half of the girls went into the beech wood and played and sang there until they were satisfied; then they were relieved by the others who played on with renewed energy. So the forest resounded from the string music and the singing which the birds also had helped along. Because of the sounds men passing by, hunters and horsemen, were finally attracted; they penetrated into the forest and there met with the musically inclined young girls. Gradually one after another became married and their father still had to provide them with dowries. But when only three daughters and three lutes remained he locked them in on the uppermost floor of the house and carried the key on his own person. Then, in the clear moonlight and starlight, more than ever before the three imprisoned daughters sang so movingly and loudly at the open but barred windows that cavaliers were

attracted from afar and there fell in love. They really did storm the house, with the people living in the vicinity helping them; the three daughters made their selection and the *Junker* had to provide them with dowries also. By this means his estate was so diminished that out of despair he killed himself, although he still could have lived comfortably. From that the saying, which one still hears occasionally from the old people in the region, originated: "He can hang himself like the *Junker* at Lautenspiel!" Didn't you even hear that?"

'Not once! Or else I've never paid any attention to it! I haven't missed anything anyway.'

The father and mother with their elder daughter now sat in the train which was taking them to Lindenberg. Setti felt half-cheered, half-fearful since she would see not only her sister but her brother-in-law too, and the saying that misery loves company did not apply here. The pervading duality also doubled the remorse instead of diminishing it, for not only did the sisters see themselves in each other but also in each other's husband their own discontent.

Having arrived at their destination the three persons took their time in climbing the mountain slope until they reached the County Office. Here too was a dwelling place of rest and delight located in the beauties of nature; but instead of the forest of leaf-bearing trees a vast view offered repose to the soul capable of it. As soon as the small group stopped a while to recover their breaths, a maid came from a well-tended vegetable garden to see who was there; a half-grown little clerk looked out of a window on the ground floor, in his mouth a cigar butt which the notary might have laid aside. But the maid led the new arrivals, whom she did not know, around the corner of the house to a bower where the lady of the house was busy ironing.

On the table lay freshly washed collars, cuffs and other fine white linens; on the floor stood a little glowing coal stove. But Frau Netti was standing at a window-like opening in the lattice-work, her hand shading her eyes, looking into the distance towards the blue mountains at Münsterburg. On the other side was the *Kreuzhalde*, while on the half-visible summit of the mountain a delicately green colouring, brushed by the western sun, suggested that forest meadow where the father had found the girls dancing with the twins. Quiet grief floated around the

motionless figure, and what could be seen of the half-open mouth looked as if it were ready to weep.

As the mother stepped into the arbour she called her daughter by name to awaken her from her deep dream. Just as her sister had done that morning so Netti also looked at her parents, joyously startled, rushing towards them with even more determination. But as soon as she saw her sister standing in back of them, she stood still and, growing pale, allowed her arms to fall at her sides permitting only the words: 'Oh Setti!' to fall.

This penitent was ill at ease also this first time that she had again seen her sister, and said just as softly: 'Oh, Netti!' But Setti, being the one who already had made peace with her parents, composed herself more quickly and offered her hand to her poor sister, Netti, who took it as timidly as if it were the hand of a ghost.

'They know everything and they're as fond of us as ever!' Setti added. But the feeling of their common past and of its error was so deep that they did not yet dare to embrace. Martin and Marie Salander now embraced both errant children and went into the house with them.

The mother examined the younger daughter who was as finely dressed as the elder except that she wore, in addition, a massive gold bracelet which her mother and father had given to her at one time.

'You've become haughty if you wear that bracelet to iron in,' she said tentatively to find out if here too the will of the husband was at fault. Inaudibly, Netti mumbled something. Setti hastened to her aid by asserting the supposition that Julian, the democratic people's man, wanted to see the bracelet on her whenever he was at home.

'Isn't he here that he doesn't allow himself to be seen?' the father asked.

'He went up in the forest early this morning,' Netti replied, 'he has a fowler's net and occasionally spends a half or a whole day up there. He does catch many little birds which he enjoys eating when they're roasted.'

'Does yours also catch birds?' he asked his other daughter.

'No, he fishes!' she said.

'Thank God, that gives me some courage,' Martin murmured, 'I had thought those two men as being too dumb for such arts.'

Nevertheless, by that I don't wish to assert that every bird catcher or fisherman necessarily must be a genius.'

Both daughters were startled noticeably by these harsh words; the mother observing this said to the younger:

'You could make some good coffee for us shortly so that we won't have to hurry too much; we want to talk over a number of things with you!'

While the coffee was being enjoyed the talk took the form of a general conference in which the wives of the two clerks, after they had become accustomed to the long-feared meeting with each other, took part intelligently and with calmed nerves. And under the eyes of their parents who were moved only by their worry over them, that came about easier than they had thought it would.

The next question for Martin and Marie Salander was whether they should take their daughters home with them without further ado or to wait and see what time would bring. The young women really did not live badly, nor did they slave in the houses of their husbands; a hundred women would have been happy only to wear their fine clothes all week long, which was being demanded of them. Their unhappiness resulted from losing the love which they had felt towards the twin notaries and without the latter feeling it or even considering it worthy of notice. By this action they showed, now more than ever, the sad baseness of their inner lives, and all that remained of the vanished dream world were empty shadows.

The suspicion that even these mere shadows would have treated their wives rudely and roughly had they not been the daughters of a rich man was obvious. Or rather, the old doubt or speculation again appeared that they had been from the very beginning heartless and immature lads to whom, through their blind stubbornness, they had become victims. But now they agreed that they would submit to their fate and be glad so long as nothing worse were to happen. And if the relationship with their parents were re-established, then, through the power of this they gradually hoped to learn to endure a great deal, which was meted out to so many women.

For the time being the parents did not know how to object. It could not then be a question of their exerting any influence upon the young men since they could not give what they did not have;

the affair did not offer a vulnerable point for attack. They contented themselves in strengthening their children who were so badly disillusioned in their idyllic dreams, strengthening them in the laudable habit of practising patience and of assuring them protection and help in all emergencies. Above all, however, they demanded that the daughters visit their parents more frequently, as often as possible, alone or together as it happened, without allowing themselves to be deterred. That they promised gladly and intended to do it and also to visit each other again as often as they pleased.

The consultation was terminated at this point by Julian's arrival. Astonished, he greeted the company which he had found so unexpectedly and regretted immensely having gone into the forest just on this day. He relieved a farm boy of the haversack and game bag which he carried for him.

'Fortunately,' he shouted, 'I'm at least bringing a little something good for the evening meal! Do you still have a sip of coffee for me, Mrs. Weidelich? Oh that's right, there are three of you women who could outvote us two men! What I wanted to say is that here's something to be roasted, which will be done as soon as this stuff is plucked. But that I'll do myself.'

He shook out his game bag onto the table; over thirty poor birds with necks wrung, sightless eyes, and stiff legs and twisted little claws stretching out lay like quiet people on the table—thrushes, chaffinches, larks, field-birds and whatever else they are called.

'You'll see, Mama, that these things will taste like marzipan if they're tender and well done. But I want to take care of that myself. Wife, is there some bacon in the kitchen?'

'Please, son, don't hurry,' said Mrs. Salander, 'In any case, my husband and I won't be eating with you; we're completely filled and we also want to leave on the last train.'

'But, Master Julian,' injected Martin, 'don't you know that the hunting of song birds is forbidden? You, a member of the Cantonal Council?'

'Father, I haven't hunted but only have stretched out the net and, of course, a few little finches who were not invited went into it. Besides, no game warden in the forest will make trouble for me.'

'Equality before the law, isn't it?' Salander replied to Julian

who obviously, although very ineptly, was alluding to the protection of his authority as a councilman.

'Well, those who want to eat may. I'm going to have these roasted—I'm hungry!' he said and emptied his cup which his wife had filled. Then he snatched up the birds by their feet, putting five or six between every two fingers, and departed from his guests carrying these dangling bird bouquets.

Some time later when his parents-in-law and Setti wanted to leave, and as they went along the hall, he came running out of the kitchen to say good-bye, wrapped in a white apron and carrying a knife in one hand and in the other one of the plucked little birds which he had cut open. Displaying his bloody fingers he excused himself for not being able to say good-bye in better form than by offering a knuckle on his right hand or an elbow. The three who were leaving saw themselves forced to take the crooked arm and, as a substitute for a handclasp, to shake it gently.

Walking ahead more quickly because she was embarrassed, his wife, little Netti, acted as if she did not notice the rudeness of her gluttonous young husband. Her mother, Marie, marvelled at how swiftly the two brothers had become coarse, and she thought that in time they would indeed become a pair of tactless and unfeeling Philistines.

From another angle Martin Salander pondered over the impression which he had received. To his daughter Netti, who wanted to accompany her parents and sister to the station below, he said:

'Does your husband have so much free time in his profession that he can follow such a hobby all day long?'

'As to that,' Netti answered, 'the pressures of business are not always constant, but I couldn't say for certain that I think he's truly neglecting anything. He works easily, as far as I can see, without much deliberation and then, if there's more to be done than usual, he doesn't think anything of sitting in his office and writing continuously half the night. Just recently he was away at Münsterburg all day long and that evening, when he came home at about 9.30, he did not go to bed immediately but went to the office even though he no longer seemed wide-awake. When it had struck three o'clock and he was not in his bed I thought he had fallen asleep down there. I arose to investigate, if only because of the lamp—to see that no accident would occur. But he

was still sitting there working. By himself he had finished a whole series of mortgages or mortgage bonds, extracts from land deed books and the like which otherwise his employees had to do; everything was cleanly written, even the titles were in painstaking Gothic script. He was just folding up the documents and placing the title on the reverse side in legal style. Everything was in good order. He did all of this because the clerk and the apprentice did not make any headway and he wanted to work ahead on some things so that it would be a little easier in the future. He didn't even like it that I came and saw how he actually did the work for which his help¹s being paid.'

'There is a certain amount of good-naturedness in that!' Salander said. 'Is your Isidor also one to work overtime, Setti?'

'Yes, occasionally he loiters about the office a long time,' replied Mrs. Isidor Weidelich, 'whether he helps those working for him I don't know. I've only noticed that he examines the books and makes notes from them.'

At the railway station in Lindenberg they had to separate. The parents immediately boarded the train for Münsterberg while Setti and Netti were still together a while longer in the little waiting room, chatting softly in wistful, forlorn tones until the train going to Unterlaub arrived.

Martin and Marie, before retiring, sat down facing each other; they were not in a rosy mood. They were now convinced that the lives of their blooming daughters had been drained of all meaning and purpose, and all the more hopelessly and endlessly, if circumstances remained in their present condition and settled down to an eternal monotone.

Marie rested her head on her arm and lost in thought stared straight ahead.

'Well, we still have Arnold to nourish a hope for,' she said without displaying any emotion, 'and it can be lost just as easily.'

'But things are not so that we should think of that possibility,' Martin said. 'He's alive and so are the daughters and they will enjoy their existence again. By the way, Arnold, if he wants to, may soon be on his return trip home; luckily, he's remained healthy, and I hope that he'll stay so in the future.'

'I wish he were already here. Tomorrow I'll write him a letter.'

After having returned from his extended educational trips, the son had entered his father's business in order to look around

more thoroughly and to get some practical experience. It, indeed, did not take long before he acquired as much insight and judgement in recognizing the necessity, or at least the usefulness, of undertaking a personal trip to those regions towards which the main efforts of the firm were directed. In this he was in agreement with the wishes of his father who for a long time felt the need for a reliable representative, especially since he himself had given up the idea of taking occasional trips. For a year or somewhat longer, Arnold had been in Brazil and already had actually rendered good services by means of quick eyes and hands. 'The task of enlarging our holdings on suitable arable lands over there,' said Salander, 'he has been able to carry on as successfully as possible under the prevailing circumstances so that whichever way the business opportunities will turn, we shall find there a secure anchorage for a long time to come. For the work and the supervising of it, he has found a diligent and loyal countryman whom we can, when the occasion arises, take in as a partner so that we no longer need a strange tenant. And as far as business is concerned Arnold has, according to the letter which I have, behaved himself appropriately and intelligently with all my business friends everywhere and he has left a good impression. To be sure, it is easier for him than it was for me when I had to peddle around with my burnt down candle. But what stirs my heart is that we possess a son and comrade who has learned thoroughly and has seen the world with its lands and people. And, moreover, since he will be independent or he is so already, then the field of action, in the best sense of the word, will be his share and will do honour to us.'

'May he live according to his nature,' said Frau Marie, 'and not otherwise; then he will remain contented. If only he were back!'

After taking consolation in her son her worries because of her daughters returned to where they had been before, bringing about a lengthy silence. Martin Salander concluded his dismal brooding:

'The thing that I can find the least rhyme or reason in is when I think back on how, in that garden where I first watched them with those two fellows, the girls led them on a leash so that they had to walk and stand as the girls wished and how afterward they forbade them any contact and the lads had obeyed. When I see

how they now no longer have the least influence and the boys behave as they please and even prescribe their wives' dresses and trimmings as if they were Oriental slave girls, and how they demurely obey while they, after all, no longer love and respect their husbands, then I must always ask myself if that is related and, if so, how that is possible.'

'Brooding doesn't help any in this instance,' replied Mrs. Salander. 'One could say that, after the wistful dreams have vanished on both sides the same people are no longer there. On the one hand, from the boy-like dream characters young men have grown who show the ruder sides of their natures, which, by the way, belong to those who fall from one boy-age into another. On the other hand, the girls became married women, their dreams about imaginary happiness have flown away and only propriety, which forbids them even to decorate their misery with daily nagging and quarrelling, has remained for they know very well that this would be the only result of every attempt to win renewed influence. Indeed, that former power over the young men already is only a part of their imaginary life. But this has been said all too frequently; we have to deal with an unexplained irregularity, with a phenomenon as you have expressed yourself previously.'

'It probably is so,' the man said in a melancholy voice. 'There are these things in the moral as well as in the physical world. May Heaven mercifully protect us!'

CHAPTER 14

EARLY THE NEXT DAY Martin Salander set out for his office to dispose of things which he had neglected yesterday. After he had done this, as well as having read the new correspondence, and just as he wanted to begin reading the morning paper, a stranger who desired to speak to him was led into the office.

A well-groomed man of foreign appearance stood erect in the middle of the room. On his face he had a growth of beard similar to that worn by the Tartars—long heavily-waxed, drooping moustache, and a fringe of whiskers framing the chin. His head was rather bald and his eyes were surrounded by many little wrinkles, which could have originated from age as well as from habitual squinting and blinking; in his hands he held a small felt hat with turned-up brim; his legs were covered up to his knees by shining boots and from one button-hole of his buttoned-up coat hung a thick golden chain which slipped back into another hole one span down.

Salander asked if he could be of service to him.

‘Old friend! Don’t you know me any longer? Me, Louis Wohlwend?’

Salander recognised the voice even if it did not have the same old sound. With its help, however, individual features of the ageing face became recognisable. At this exact moment he would have thought first of Death before he thought of Wohlwend, and he had to recollect as to how he really stood in relation to that individual. Therefore, he limited himself to scrutinizing him without saying anything and without grasping the outstretched hand. That man Wohlwend pulled up a chair, sat down on it and, with a gesture, invited his old friend and business partner to take his place at the desk again.

‘I perceive,’ he once more commenced speaking, ‘that I should have announced the purpose of my visit so as not to stumble over the old bone of contention which, as it appears, still lies between us. Because of that bill of exchange from the bankrupt

Atlantic Shore Bank you once upon a time persecuted me unjustly but, of course, accomplished nothing for I was not able to pay anything that I owed, still less, consequently, what I didn't owe. Then I had an opportunity to journey to Hungary for a merchant dealing in oak staves, and from there I roamed around in the Hungarian lands seeking out a living as an agent* in all possible branches of trade without making any profit; I was busy with wood, wine, sheep's wool and even with hog bristles. By means of these bristles I reached the neighbourhood of Essek on the Drave River where a big hog breeder took a liking to me. He also dealt with other products and wanted to employ me as his book-keeper or *factotum*, and there I remained. I was, as you know, still unmarried, but now I found the occasion to do so. My employer had two daughters—from two wives. The one from his first wife became mine, and so that the dowries of both daughters should not become entangled each received what was due to her; thus during his lifetime he put his estate in order and protected each share. Now the man is dead. From the income of my wife I can live with her properly, and because of a well-run household can lay aside some money each year. If the real estate which he left behind can be sold profitably then the situation might, perhaps, be even better. Naturally, the first thing that I thought of was the gradual return of losses caused by me and which possibly had not been settled by contracts; first and foremost stands the entire sum of the bond which you had raised for me, old friend Salander, before you went to Brazil that first time. I want to make a lengthy stop here. Of course, I can only use the savings from the yearly revenues of my wife and, accordingly, I must make payments in instalments. To make a long story short, I've come to make the first payment!'

He pulled out a wallet and placed several banknotes on Martin Salander's desk. Whereupon he continued speaking:

'Here are five thousand francs. Will you do me the favour of booking it as the first instalment and of computing a low interest rate for the entire elapsed time; also have it amortised gradually for I have two boys who have to be educated and this will cause me expenses.'

Martin Salander now found himself in a dilemma. If Wohl-

* *Anschicksmann*: a term no longer in use; a kind of agent whose duty it was to find new customers.

wend's desire to pay truly was intended seriously then he, Salander, must confer with him in a more friendly manner—and yet he did not even know whether he ought to accept the money without having first consulted his attorney. But, nevertheless, if Wohlwend were innocent in that later episode with the Shore Bank, which certainly could easily be possible, then he stood nobly before him with his good resolutions and with the actual beginning of their realisation, and Salander dare not reject him unkindly.

Therefore, he picked up the five bank notes, smoothed them out and after a short period of reflection, said:

'It's agreeable to me if you can reimburse me for that bail money; one can always use money which was believed lost doubly well. In regard to the simple interest rate, it will be four per cent. I suggest we count those ten years after which time the claim had expired so that we obtain from the capital and the ten years' interest a round sum which will not change anymore if the instalments are paid faithfully. These five thousand francs, therefore, are the first instalment of the total sum in question.'

'I recognise my staunch old friend!' Louis Wohlwend replied in a heart-felt voice. 'The rate of interest and the time limit are agreeable and I accept both of them gratefully!'

'Then I want to write out a temporary receipt and, since perhaps it would be more acceptable to you, afterward I'll execute a detailed document myself so that I won't have to assign the book-keeper the task of writing it out.'

'Just as you wish! And again thank you!' Wohlwend replied, stretching out his hand towards him, filled with brotherly love. 'See now I can consider myself as truly returned since I've made my peace with the oldest friend of my youth.'

Salander, because of the proceedings which occurred peaceably after all and which unexpectedly had returned the money to him he had earned a long time ago, forgot everything that he had suffered because of Wohlwend and at one time had said about him. He shook his hand in a very friendly manner, like a good-natured man from whose heart a weight had been lifted and who could rid himself of an old, even justified, grudge. He allowed Louis, who appeared half Asiatic and yet spoke an affected-sounding German dialect, to go on talking. He remained chattering until noon, asking about everything; he scrutinized the busi-

ness people who came and went, alternately praising Salander's good fortune. And when Salander started out to go home for dinner he did not avoid the company of Wohlwend who wanted to escort him a piece.

They arrived at the inn where Louis Wohlwend was staying. He stopped at the door, holding Salander's hand tightly.

'Would you do me the pleasure of coming inside with me for a moment! I'd be overjoyed at being able to introduce you to my family—wife and boys and sister-in-law.'

'That can be done very easily some other time,' Martin excused himself, adding, 'they're waiting for me at home.'

'You don't understand!' pressed Wohlwend, 'I'd like to go to the top of the Rigi with them early tomorrow so that they'll see a little piece of our splendour. And then something else will prevent another meeting. Come in for just a minute.'

In order to cut short the inevitable Salander allowed himself to be hurried up the stairs, and in a drawing-room he saw two stately ladies facing him. Their beauty as well as their bearing and travelling clothes appeared different, but equally strange.

'Now this is my old friend, Martin Salander!' he announced to them and then turned to Martin:

'This is my wife, Alexandra Wohlwend, née Glawicz. This is her sister, Miss Myrrha Glawicz, and these are my boys, George and Louis.'

Salander offered his hand to all of them who greeted him with somewhat awkward signs of respect; he spoke to them a little about the journey which they had made and the like. During this time Louis Wohlwend had slipped out and had come back again.

'So, old friend! Do us the honour of eating with us, I've sent the servant whom we hired here to your home with the news that you're here and well taken care of!'

'But, good friend, that will never do!' said Salander who opposed this. It did him no good and he yielded.

A quarter of an hour passed before the bell rang calling them to the table, and during this time the conversation was by no means easy, especially when Wohlwend did not chatter. But it was not boring to Salander because he examined the strange people without feeling any embarrassment.

When they finally were going to the table he had to escort Mrs. Wohlwend's sister and he also sat next to her.

'Look out!' Louis Wohlwend said in jest, 'Hellenic blood probably flows in her veins. My father-in-law, may his soul rest in peace, had fetched her mama, may her soul rest in peace, over from the Black Sea, and their ancestors are said to have come there from Thessaly.'

Martin, out of the corner of his eye, looked at his silent neighbour who was now quite close to him. He saw a pair of shining eyes which turned towards him as if in indifferent sadness. From the dark braids of hair a perfect line formed by the forehead and nose descended, and under the full mouth the nicest round chin was to be found—as if everything followed the recipe for antique Greek women's heads.

Salander felt a tingling pleasure beside the rare form; when Wohlwend had ordered champagne and after he had enjoyed a few glasses, it seemed to him as if he had uncovered a new continent or a new axiom, in short, as if he had found Columbus' egg.

All those strangers who were in the dining-room when they had come in had already gone, but not without most of them throwing a glance as they passed by at the beauty sitting next to Martin. A waiter also approached the group while they were still sitting over the champagne. He offered to carry everything into the adjoining room because in two hours meals would again be served in the dining-room and the tables would have to be laid again. At the same time he lifted the bottle from the cooler and examined it, but it was empty.

This insolence of the bottle, as well as of the waiter, awakened Martin Salander from a dream-like condition. He arose and declined Wohlwend's pressing offer to follow the waiter's proposal.

'Well, old friend,' said Louis Wohlwend, 'then another time! I hope that we can again learn to understand each other. Friendship is not the worst of ideals, especially when it is an old one like good wine!'

Salander, who again had become completely awakened did not find the comparison to be completely true for in these days very old wine was not treasured as highly as before. Nevertheless, he suppressed this remark and hastened to take leave of the people who stood around in a circle. The last was Miss Myrrha Glawicz, the one with Greek blood, who was standing behind him; he looked for her in the wrong place so he spun around in some

confusion and almost slipped before he could offer his hand to the silent lady and depart.

Striding along the streets with winged strides he said to himself: To me it seems like the silence of the blue heavens there in ancient Hellas. By Jove, beauty is indeed something great—the classic beauty! With that he snapped his fingers in the air unknowingly; one or two passers-by looked after him, amazed.

‘Who is this stranger that was visiting you and with whom you ate at the inn?’ asked his wife, Marie, whom he had gone to see for a short time before returning to the office.

‘Weren’t you told?’ asked Martin, nonplussed.

‘That you know yourself; you merely announced that you would not be coming home to eat and that you would eat there.’

‘I didn’t have anything announced; he did it without my knowledge!’

‘Which he?’

‘Oh! Well guess—that Louis Wohlwend.’

‘He’s here? And you ate with him?’

Mrs. Salander sat transfixed with amazement—but not of the joyous type.

‘Don’t be so amazed! Just imagine, he wants to pay up our bond money, with interest; as a beginning he brought along five thousand francs.’

‘I wish that the earth had swallowed him up with it! If we hadn’t become accustomed to the loss of the money then he wouldn’t have brought it. And immediately you again establish a friendship?’

‘Not exactly that! But don’t be so peculiar, dear Marie. I can’t see anything else in it other than that since he is now able to do it he wants to make amends for his wrongdoing.’

‘Oh Martin, and I can see nothing more in his coming than to rob you for the third time.’

‘He has no reason to do that anymore. Indeed, he never was such a rogue that now, having married a fortune, out of mere whim pays an old debt only to use it as bait for a new catch. And then he would not have shown up with wife and children.’

‘Heaven protect us! Wife and children? They must be perfect specimens.’

‘Perfect? Just look at them and you’ll be surprised! His wife doesn’t seem to me to be especially well-bred. I haven’t looked

at her properly because she has a younger sister, a Miss Myrrha, whom I had to watch. I tell you, an Antigone, a Nausicaa—beautiful Helen herself I'd say if she wouldn't appear too pious for that!'

Not until now did Frau Marie take a better look at her enthusiastic husband and perceive his slightly flushed face and sparkling eyes. In this unaccustomed seizure of a belated beauty worship he appeared to her to be so lovably comical that she had to laugh heartily and she regarded him with growing mirth.

'It certainly is true!' he shouted naïvely, ascribing her joyous state to her scepticism, not divining how much nobler the mood was which animated her. And as she continued to watch him with still more merry good will he left her impatiently, saying:

'Oh come on! Be a good sport!'

This good Martin! she thought leaning back in her easy chair and folding her hands for a moment, he won't change until he is smashed to bits. He's always hunting up a new Easter rabbit whenever he's through with the old one. Now he's again busy with Greek beauty as he had called it in olden times; the next thing he'll do is pick up the *Odyssey* which we at one time read through. Well, he keeps his spirit always in motion; he's always busy with something and doesn't have to play at nine-pins.

Meanwhile, that man described so favourably went towards his place of business already in a different humour than when he had set out. Not until he was out in the street did he feel the charming attitude of his wife whose inner youth had glowed through the rust of the years the more gracefully the more unusual the occurrence was.

The little displeasure which he felt in her laugh disappeared unnoticed. Who would have thought, he said to himself, that this good Marie whom I have known for so long would be capable of such a delicate golden mood in an event like this! Never have I seen her that way. It truly cannot be said here that man does not change until he is smashed to bits! Always when one expects it the least she brings a new light. To be sure, since she remains the same in this it cannot be said that she changes.

But neither of the two remembered even a little word of the conversation concerning the daughters which they had had last night before going to bed, and what they had said of the irregular and inexplicable phenomena of human life.

CHAPTER 15

FOR SOME WEEKS Martin Salander heard nothing more of Louis Wohlwend and his family, and even though he was curious, now and then, of what his outlandish good friend would gamble on, in the end he thought less and less about it and became indifferent to the entire affair.

One evening Frau Marie announced to him that she would like to visit their daughters and would like to spend a day with each one. Both of their husbands had journeyed to a shooting festival in West Switzerland and would not leave there until they had tried for a few silver cups, which they succeeded in obtaining only after long hours of shooting and after a great expenditure of money. Their wives wanted to utilise their absence in a thorough inspection of household goods, namely, in bedding and linens, and to have their mother there as an aide with her counsel. Naturally, they had thought in this way of being certain of a full summer's day in the uninterrupted company of their mother and, in addition to this, of so arranging it that each of the sisters would take part in the visit and in the advice given to the other, thus hoping to obtain not only instructive observation and a comparison of the losses in their possessions but also a highly satisfactory and confiding visit, lasting several days and nights, for the three of them. Each daughter wanted the visitor, for whom she yearned, to stay with her at least one night.

Martin found everything agreeable to him save the expensive shooting sport of his sons-in-law, who had indeed installed in each house a glass cupboard with a row of shining cups in it, even though they were unable to fire one sure shot. But since it was that way he was glad that the three women were to have the two or three undisturbed days, and he told his wife to stay with the children as long as she enjoyed herself and as long as it would do her good. The air in both places was as pure and healthy as possible.

On the appropriate day he took his spouse to the station where

the servant had already carried a basket of good things to make the reunion of the grass-widows somewhat more festive.

After leaving the railway station Salander took a lengthy walk through sections of the city which were just springing up or had recently been finished, and he amused himself by observing the houses in which he had money invested. But since he did not walk around town frequently he was no longer able to identify them. On that his thoughts turned to the alarming increase of building fever which, indeed, he himself had promoted and also to the rumours which already were being circulated concerning an unavoidable building 'bust.' Let it come, he thought, I only have first mortgages anyway, and even if it were not so, it's neither here nor there. One has to march with the times, they even everything out. What would our craftsmen do if it were not for the little building activity?

Closely he examined a beautiful house which appeared already occupied, for on the ground floor a place of business or stock room was being established and the windows of the upper stories had been curtained. As he stood there, Louis Wohlwend stepped out of the house and caught sight of him.

'Ho,' he cried, 'there he is just as if he had been called; my old friend! At precisely this moment I was at the point of looking you up at your office. I'd gladly lead you upstairs right away for we're living in this house temporarily, but my ladies are not yet in a position to receive visitors and they would spit like cats if I were to bring a gentleman in.'

'Indeed?' said Salander when he finally was able to get in a word, 'you've taken a flat and you think of staying here?'

'It's very possible that we'll at least stay until the boys are through school. I've felt that I must send them to school here for they should certainly remain Swiss. We travelled around for several weeks and visited Lake Geneva; in Lausanne I found a private school which I like. I want to send them there for a year or so—it depends; afterward they ought to finish at a good secondary school, *Gymnasium* or some other school here or somewhere else in German Switzerland.'

'What are they supposed to become?' asked Salander.

'Not merchants, at any rate, if I have my way! I'm fed up with it, especially since not everyone is endowed with the luck of a Martin Salander.'

The latter did not resent the expression which he had heard already from other failures; he smiled good naturedly.

'Then you have studies in mind for the boys?'

'Studies? Hm—yes and no! I fear that the lads are not quite intelligent enough. However, I have a faint suspicion that they could master theology.'

'Theology? During these days that certainly must be the most difficult subject since it calls for the most contradictory abilities.'

'Not as much as you think!' Louis Wohlwend replied, his eyes twinkling. Actually neither knew how the other meant it or wanted it to mean, and so they let the subject drop.

'Where are you going,' asked Wohlwend.

'To the office; I've taken my wife to the railway station as she's going away for several days and afterward I took a little walk. Now its time that I get back.'

'I'll walk along a little way. Quite apropos! What do you have to say to my living in your house?'

'In my house? Where? I don't have any!'

'The one I came out of. I've spoken with the proprietor over the present building conditions and thereby discovered where he received the money. Therefore its just as much your house as his.'

'I don't see why! Even if that man would have to sell, others would buy it. I'm safe.'

'Who can say that? If the market value sinks around one-third or one-fourth then the houses will be yours, and not until then will they be worth the money.'

'But is that house really one of those in which I have money invested? What's the owner's name?'

'What, you don't know your own houses? I swear to God, Martin, you astound me!' With these words Wohlwend threw a piercing glance at his old friend who accidentally was a half-step ahead of him and did not feel those evil eyes.

Wohlwend himself probably did not know what had caused the sudden momentary fury—whether it was Salander's luck in acquiring things or the easy calm with which he possessed them. While Wohlwend already had spied out more than he had betrayed, Salander did not even know where the houses stood in which he had money invested, and this affected Wohlwend like a personal insult. Salander did not think it worth his while to repeat

the question regarding the name of the owner of the house, hence this question remained unanswered from the first time it had been asked.

But scarcely had Wohlwend overtaken that half-step than the evil light had disappeared and he gossiped further.

'Old friend! What I wanted to say is this: I don't know what your esteemed wife's feelings are towards me. I would very much like to greet her under the present circumstances, especially since I'm afflicted with ladies to whom proper companionship would be a necessity. Because of the early death of their mothers they have not been advanced in higher education, although when the occasion arose they had, of course, received instructions from young wandering clerical or secular teachers. It wouldn't mean too much, and then too it wouldn't be too important, if they had more social graces—a compensation they would have been able to acquire in their native circumstances—but that's just it, as you may easily notice: for that reason I must be careful to introduce them soon into this or that house where they'll be able to learn something, just the most necessary——'

'You're knocking at the wrong door,' Salander interrupted him, 'my wife lives a rather retired life and doesn't even keep a ladies' maid. For many years we contented ourselves with an elderly servant, and so you can imagine that we don't live in a grand style where there is something for ladies to learn.'

'Never mind! The gracious lady does not care for me, I know that very well; however, in spite of that I have the deepest respect for her and I would say that she herself represents a good household. Do understand me; I'm not looking for something glamorous for the poor little women but for an example of serene noble femininity in every action.'

'Again, Marie is not the right person if you ask that of her,' Salander once more interrupted that obtrusive person, 'she can't stand those words and even now she has not yet forgiven the speaker who, on the occasion of the wedding of our daughters, once had called her, before all the people, a model of noble femininity.'

'Ha, that jolly wedding!' cried Wohlwend. 'I read a newspaper account of it when I was at the bristle market in Budapest. I was just having my breakfast of a knuckle of pork with a mug of Erlauer wine and had picked up a newspaper and just hap-

pened to read: "To the famous *Wedding at Canaan* by Camacho (whom I don't know) will have to be added that one arranged by one Mr. Martin Salander in the free country of Switzerland, which he had furnished for his two daughters on the occasion of their marriage; not only was a crowd of people entertained but also political plays and allegories were performed—and everything in the open air." You'll have to tell me more of that. Imagine how that electrified me and how my mouth watered in spite of my roasted pig's knuckle.'

'Yes, some other time,' said Salander who had become flushed and embarrassed and looked at his watch. 'But now I must attend to my business; it's almost nine o'clock.'

But Wohlwend took him by his coat buttons.

'One more word, old friend. You're alone at home, aren't you? We never had a chance to have a heart to heart talk so do me the favour of sharing what we have tonight—if you have nothing else planned. Of course, we're not settled completely and we're without any luxuries or a kitchen. I know you won't mind, however. We have to move within our own four walls if we want to be undisturbed. You promise to come, won't you?'

Martin felt displeased by Wohlwend's new obtrusiveness and he also remembered Frau Marie's aversion to the man. However, the fact that he had planned to eat out and a certain curiosity to see that beauteous form once more, the praise of which had evoked such lovely mirth in his wife, suddenly changed his mind, or with rising mists veiled his consciousness, and he accepted; whereupon Wohlwend departed hurriedly and Salander at last arrived at his place of business. He remained a few hours, constantly occupied even after his employees had left; with clear eyes he surveyed the business situation from all sides. Whenever difficulties arose they did not stem from self-delusions or thoughtless proceedings, therefore he could face them with calm casualness. In the quiet of the noon hour he threw an examining glance into the books as well as into his personal notes concerning the more important happenings in general. He perceived with satisfaction—what he of course knew—that the pace of his business transactions did not make bold leaps but calmly moved ahead in an even current. Gratefully, he thought he recognised the good luck attached to him, because since the time of his earlier misfortunes he had met with—or rather they were attracted to him—

only honest and reliable business friends, if he wanted to be so vain as to boast of that fact.

The gears of the heavy clock over the desk whined, struck the quarter hour and then a booming 'one,' reminding him that he had promised Louis Wohlwend to eat at his house and that this oldest friend was the only one who reportedly had brought misfortune to him. He was almost startled, but he locked up the papers again pondering indecisively whether he would not do better by following the feelings of his Frau Marie by not going and breaking altogether with that strange fellow. But when he remembered how Wohlwend had indeed shown goodwill and had confirmed it actively by voluntarily making good on the past, it seemed improper and cruel to him to treat the man like that when he apparently had saved himself from a life which was, perhaps, more foolish than evil and had settled down.

With that he arose from his chair, looked for the hair and clothes brushes of his employees, which the men kept in a corner, washed his hands and, since he was supposed to sit at the table with women, tidied himself up as far as his age permitted. Then he rang for the handy-man who lived in the house and ordered him to close the office and also to tell the book-keeper that he would not appear that afternoon.

In the house in question he climbed three flights of stairs until he found an apartment on the door of which was fastened a card with the name: *L. Vohlwend—Glavicz*. If those highly-situated living quarters showed modest ways of living then the card announced that its owner finally had entered the guild of those people who always have to tamper with their honest names. Martin shook his head and, his hand on the bell, hesitated for the last time. After all, he probably doesn't mean anything other than indulging in a little vanity since he now has the leisure for that sort of thing, Salander felt after some reflection; and so he pulled on the bell.

It was a little while before one of the boys came and opened the door, admitting the guest with a silent bow. Through the open door of a room he saw the prepared table at which stood the other little son, who was counting the almonds which lay on a plate. Both boys wore boots like their father and long yellow coats similar to those worn by lackeys; in similar taste their hair was heavy with pomade and closely glued to their

temples. Thus they gave the impression of being the children of parents who do not know how to dress them. When no one else appeared Salander asked the boy who had opened the door for him what his name was since he had forgotten.

'George,' replied the boy, again with a bow, 'And that one over there is Louis.'

'That's right! Now, where is your papa?'

'He's sitting in there,' said George, pointing to another door. Martin knocked and heard someone from within calling for him to enter.

'Ah, friend Salander,' called Wohlwend who was sitting writing at a little table near the window but who now arose and approached offering his hand. 'Welcome to our home.'

'I have to apologise for being so late,' said Salander. 'I had quite forgotten about it back at my office until the clock struck one.'

'It doesn't matter, as you see I was also occupied; I'm a poor devil and forever have to bother with that fortune belonging to my wife; it is a somewhat difficult region back there and my sister-in-law has her own legal advisor of course, but I also have to watch him continually. At this time I'm holding his latest account in my hands. But now we shall see what's keeping the ladies.'

He grabbed some papers which lay on the table and locked them in a dresser.

'Just look at this piece of furniture, see how well it's painted,' he said, 'pure pinewood and it looks as if it were walnut! You know that until the present temporary situation has been decided upon we're completely in rented furnishings, beds and everything. We've also had the meal sent over from the restaurant, although we have brought a cook with us. She, however, does not yet know how to get along with the local facilities.'

A door opened and Frau Alexandra Wohlwend—Glavicz entered. She walked in rustling silks and was approximately as tall as her husband. In spite of this she seemed to look at his eyes as if she were afraid of doing something improperly. Her face was well-built but expressionless and more deeply wrinkled than was appropriate for the, perhaps, forty years which she had lived.

'Do you see?' Wohlwend turned to her. 'Here in this country it is not: "I kiss your hand my gracious lady," whenever a man

comes. You merely offer him your hand and he shakes it, that's all!'

Salander helped the lady's manœuvre along by offering her his hand according to the prescription which he had just learned.

'Good day, Mr. Councillor Salander, sir!' she said in an almost coarse voice. 'It makes me happy if you want to put up with our simple food.'

While saying this she bowed instead of him, exactly as her son, George, had done previously.

'Not that way!' Wohlwend cried laughingly. 'He didn't even kiss your hand so don't you make a bow just for that.'

She became very red, because in spite of the laughing she caught the stinging glance which he had thrown at her at the same time. He was angry because of the phrases of her welcome which she had obviously memorised and uttered incorrectly. Luckily for her as she stood there timidly the door again opened and her half-sister appeared, immediately drawing Salander's eyes to her and keeping them there. She truly was a beautiful woman; although just as tall as her sister she was probably twenty years younger and the white dress which she wore showed off her perfect figure. The dress was made simply—without frills; its main decoration consisted of a lace collar, also white in colour, which permitted the most beautiful shoulders and arms to show through sparingly, but these only caused the material to drape all the more gracefully. The stately appearance of this gentle shyness which seemed to envelop everything like moonlight transfigured the modestly moving form, imparting to it a more subtle lustre. She smiled lightly as she greeted Salander, but more like drawing a breath than like smiling at him or at anybody else; on this occasion he bowed involuntarily in spite of his democratic sentiments—even removing his hands from behind his back where he had held them up to now. At this moment the boys came and announced that the soup was on the table.

'Then let's go before it becomes cold!' exhorted Wohlwend. 'It's the only thing that the cook has produced today, a good Austro-Hungarian soup, not to forget a dessert. Mr. Councillor, may I ask you to offer your arm to my wife and to lead the way to the left?'

Martin had to gather his wits to follow the invitation. Where

did he get these accursed skills, he thought. Years ago he knew as little of them as I.

Today, naturally, he had to sit next to Mrs. Wohlwend, but in exchange the beautiful Myrrha of Hellenistic origin sat opposite him.

To his astonishment Louis Wohlwend immediately seized the soup ladle and plunged it into the bowl after the cook, also a remarkable character, had taken away the cover.

'This is my duty,' he said to Salander who was watching. 'May I ask you for your plates, we want to pass them on for there are so few of us.'

His wife was obviously embarrassed to be ordered about in such a way, but he filled one plate after another, fishing out each one's share of the good things which rested at the bottom of the bowl, thus practising just measurement, and also seeing to it that no plate overflowed in being handed around.

Throughout his entire lifetime whenever soup was forthcoming Martin had been accustomed to begin eating it without delay as soon as it was in his plate. Since the ladling-out process was concluded he did not hesitate any longer; he submerged his spoon in the broth and lifted it to his mouth. When it was half-way there and the host seemed to have waited for just that moment, Wohlwend suddenly said casually:

'George, pray!'

Dumbfounded, Martin held his spoon suspended in mid-air and looked up. All were holding their folded hands before them while that boy offered grace. So there was nothing more for him to do than to lower his spoon and at least place his hands on the table before him; he lacked the audacity to fold his hands hypocritically. In the meantime he freely watched Louis Wohlwend, how he looked downward very seriously and how, under his tartar-like moustache, his lips were pressed together as if he had a sip of wine on the tip of his tongue.

After the prayer was concluded the soup was consumed without any further hindrances, and since it was the custom that little be spoken, Salander found time to ponder over the incident. That the custom of saying grace was carried on in a family having children, and that Wohlwend, who probably had met with the custom in his father-in-law's house, had his children do it, did not shock him as much as the unmistakable design with which he

had allowed his unsuspecting guest to pick up his spoon before he gave the command. From this Martin concluded that it must have been especially meant for him, and while he recognised with secret delight the old pranks, he only wondered for what purpose they still would be necessary. He saw that Wohlwend himself had not felt the insulting aspects of it. As long as they had known him or believed to have known him he had not suspected that his good friend had become more and more malicious—a quality which could be perceived soon where he least wanted it to be seen. Wohlwend, moreover, observed that his guest did not take the little incident of his newest invention apathetically, and, therefore, he opened the dinner conversation as follows:

‘Old friend, perhaps you’re surprised by the custom which we have just practised. You know I never was a hypocrite and I never intend becoming one; I always chased around in the meanest hunt for profit, but in these times and in the life which I must lead, being fruitlessly exhausted, one learns again to look more towards salvaging the old ideals of mankind, perhaps, not for one’s self, but for the children, something to which they can cling. You understand!’

Salander noticed that the women, as well as the boys, looked at the speaker attentively, and as could be seen in the expression on their faces they took his words which were new and unintelligible to them as something great and wise. He therefore, did not want to leave the head of the family in the lurch—not even by remaining silent.

‘You’re quite right!’ he replied, ‘aside from the question of worship at home, I always held that one has not the right to withhold from the children the content of the Christian religion as it presents itself, considering the position which it maintains in world history as well as in the present life. One has the duty to reserve for them the development of free convictions until the time when they are mature; for that purpose they must learn what has existed up to their time and they must hear what religion has to say about itself and not what others have to say about it.’

The cook, a plump person tanned by nature and in the costume of a Slovakian peasant woman, now carried in two or three dishes whose planning gave testimony of modest and sensible thinking far from any exhibitionism. The wine which Wohlwend

poured was also a savoury, though by no means expensive, Transylvanian wine tapped directly from the barrel, since finer bottles were not in evidence.

'I already had this wine sent from home; drink up, it tastes better and better and you won't feel it!' he added.

Salander was almost astonished by the middle-class respectability which followed the prayer, while the presence of the servant in a foreign folk costume again imparted an almost elegant aspect to it.

But Wohlwend continued his discourse. 'In your way you've expressed yourself very well as to what concerns the religious education of children. But I'd like to go a step further and say that if we've brought it only to this point then we also should retain, or once more accept, the more ideal viewpoints for us elders; it doesn't burden us too heavily.'

If I only knew what he wants, thought Salander and thereby lost several of Wohlwend's words, but he again found his way, approximately, as the latter continued:

'Yes, friend, I'm convinced that while establishing the immediate will of the people, which has been gloriously achieved, you have overlooked, so to speak, a great thing—cleanly forgotten it. You have ignored religion and you have rebuffed the Church instead of taking the clergy into your interest. That you will have to pay for.'

'Who then has done something to religion or, moreover, to the clergy?' asked Salander. 'At least I, who was not present, know nothing of it.'

'Enough has been accomplished by acting as though one were not there, and it is a shame to have missed the possibility of establishing the divine state of modern times.'

Salander shouted laughingly: 'Establishing the divine state of modern times? You're talking in iambs! Then we should continue in that manner. Do you still remember how Schiller's *Don Carlos* closes? No? "Cardinal, I have done my share, now do yours!" Thus the play will close again and again.'

'And I will not rest but will try to sell my ideas to humanity!' replied Wohlwend for whom Salander's quotation was meaningless since he had never finished reading the drama. 'I could make good much neglect and, perhaps, approaching the sundown of my life, could still make myself useful to my fatherland.'

This becomes more and more strange, Salander thought, he comes to graft onto our democracy a theocratic movement that was missing; for that reason, of course, we have built our democratic state. But the foolishness of which he makes a show is much more grandiose than his earlier pranks; it is to be hoped that the bankruptcy from which he flees this time is not on the same scale. But that can't be, otherwise he would not be paying old debts. Perhaps it's pure wantonness, since he is now settled; he wants also to play his part and since there's nothing else readily available he's joined some missionary sect and acts like an apostle.

In the meantime Wohlwend really delivered a sermon which Salander in his absent-mindedness did not even hear. The word-noise, which was by the way quite empty, only served to put his attentiveness to sleep even more, and his thoughts also lost sight of each other as if a foggy mist had risen between them. In order to find out where he really was he looked up and saw opposite him the countenance of Miss Myrrha whose mournful, long-lashed, elegiacal eyes were beholding him and whose lips were opened in a graceful smile, since his surprised features had changed their expression. Because his glass stood empty she seized a flask and filled the goblet; whereupon he took the former and poured out some for her. For the occasion he modestly touched his glass to hers and drank to her health. With that the reflection of a youthful gleam of happiness flowed over his face and let its wrinkles stretch, wriggle and coil like little snakes, almost producing the impression of good-natured folly. Wohlwend observed the incident and stopped in the middle of his speech.

'Stop!' he said. 'For toasts we must use a better wine.'

He went out bringing back a better bottle after all, a bottle of tokay whose golden liquid flowed through the moderate Martin Salander with cheerful warmth and turned to merry words in his mouth—even though not words of wisdom. He spoke for the pretty ears of Myrrha Glawicz, without knowing what went into them or what could please them, and since his own light flickered as if in a draught, the coherence and meaning of his talk was not quite recognisable.

Still it remained unnoticed since, because of the unexpected end of Wohlwend's sermon and Salander's cheerful state, a kind of liveliness had set in and even the boys had become noisy.

In this little uproar Martin suddenly had the desire, for the sake of the beautiful dinner companion, to honour the family and to invite them for a drive with him. He took a visiting card from his case and wrote an order for the liveryman, whose customer he was in emergencies, to send a good coach. Louis Wohlwend, pleasantly affected, solemnly accepted the invitation and sent his boys off with the card to take it to one of the messengers who was standing on the next street corner.

In a half hour the coachman drove up with a well-kept, open carriage; after an additional short half hour the ladies were ready; the group swept down the three flights of stairs with a great to-do, and it chanced that the proprietor of the house, who in reality was in debt to Salander, was standing at the doorway and greeted him. Thus, today, Wohlwend was able to act completely like a Hungarian presiding judge and could show off as being a friend of the capitalist and great merchant, and so, benevolently, he flourished his little hat.

The women had dressed in broad hats with feathers on them, and gaily-coloured shawls. Myrrha wore one of red silk crepe over her white dress. The two men on the back seat had taken the boy, Louis, between them; George sat next to the coachman up on his seat. For rented horses they were fast enough and beautifully harnessed, the entire conveyance in fact was striking; in this manner Martin Salander unsuspectingly drove through a large portion of the city and everyone who recognised him looked after him without his being aware of it.

He did not see Mr. Möni Wighart either who, standing on one of the squares, was blowing a burnt-down cigar butt from his meerschaum cigar holder in order to put in a new one, and who with his old walking stick under his arm was almost as little aged or damaged as his staff. Martin's old lawyer was standing next to Wighart conversing with him; the former's hair had begun to thin, which on this warm day was very convenient because he had taken his hat off in order to cool the top of his head. Both looked after the carriage.

'Why there goes Martin Salander and he doesn't even see us!' Wighart said, 'what people does he possibly have with him?'

After the lawyer had put on his glasses and had recognised the gentlemen on the rear seat he answered:

'That can be only one individual—can you guess who?'

'I haven't any idea! I was at the baths for four weeks and I came back last night.'

'Well, it's none other than the one-time Schadenmüller and Company, Louis Wohlwend.'

'You don't say! How is that possible? I had thought that might be a disguised Chinaman with his family. And how long has this rascal been here?'

'It's been some time since Mr. Salander first came to me and related how Wohlwend had appeared and had produced a partial payment for that first loss, you remember of that youthful bond money, and that he wants to make yearly payments on the balance. Salander asked me whether he dare enter into such an agreement without any danger of being cheated. I told him to take whatever he could get. He as good as absolved Wohlwend of that later, larger event. I could not recommend any precautions since that man Wohlwend is the Old Sorcerer incarnated in a stupid brain. He has settled down and taken up lodgings here, and when the tax form was sent to him he brought everything he had to the city hall and proved that everything he possessed was his wife's dowry; he definitely declared to be willing to have everything taxed here that was not located in Hungary and was not taxed there.'

'And now Salander goes riding in a coach with him?'

'Or the other with him, I don't know which. But as much as I could see as they sped past a beautiful piece of femininity also sat in the carriage,' added the lawyer. 'I wonder whether perhaps Satan doesn't want to catch mice in this way?'

'There's no danger there! Master Martin would have begun sooner if he had wanted to stumble over such stones. But nevertheless this event, the return of Schadenmüller, is as bitter as gall to me. That damned rascal with his moustache! That dunce, as Salander once called him, is here again! Of course, it wouldn't hurt Martin if he again were to receive a lesson which is not too severe, for he deserves an occasional tweak on his nose—if only for his eternal busybodyness! Still I don't wish it on him for he is, after all, an honest man.'

'He certainly is that!' said the lawyer, pressing Mr. Wighart's hand as he took leave of him.

Martin, the man thus praised, rode with the Wohlwend-Glawicz family to a pleasantly located recreation spot which

was two hours distant from the city and which was famous and much frequented because of its good service, beautiful view and shady gardens. There they spent the afternoon in coffee drinking and with walks which were induced by the neat paths of a nearby pine wood. Now and then Salander led Myrrha whose white dress shone in the green half-darkness. Whenever she walked alone he saw her touched lightly by mottled streaks of sunlight and with the innate grace which was at her disposal as soon as she could rid herself of the manners acquired by an imperfect education.

An artist acquaintance who encountered Salander in one of these moments stopped next to him, gazed after the beautiful individual and asked what kind of a Muse he had ferreted out.

'She's a beautiful woman, isn't she?' he said with affected casualness.

'I should think so indeed! One doesn't see something like that every day. Zounds! Look, what artless rhythm and without display—one scarcely knows what it really is—form and movement poured into one. How nobly it flows from the neck over the shoulders and arms to the back, and from the hips down! Where does that damsel come from?'

'She comes from Hungary, but her mother is supposed to have sprung from old Greek soil, from Thessaly.'

'Quite possible! And even so she's a rarity! Much pleasure, Mr. Salander.'

The words of the artist and connoisseur brought about a strange agitation both inside and outside of Martin; they made his heart pound and his eyes shine while at the same time they paralysed his steps so that he had to sink down upon a bench which was in the little wood.

What a confirmation of his feeling for beauty! How this dark impulse would yet be brightened to wander a little of the way in the rays of pure beauty, and he did not suspect how really pedantic it was of him to allow it to be confirmed by the testimony of another, a connoisseur.

But he collected himself, awakened by the voices of the Wohlwends who were approaching, searching for him. With a changed countenance and full of an inner amazement over the richness of life, and at the same time subdued by a serious reluctance, he walked back to the garden with them where an evening meal had been ordered. There at Myrrha's side which he had found

without looking for it he remained, speaking little and relinquishing speech to her brother-in-law who imparted all kinds of lessons to his wife and boys and, occasionally, unexpectedly surprised friend Salander with an 'Isn't that right?' and then looked at him attentively.

In the meantime still more guests gathered who arrived on horseback or in carriages and who had come on the spur of the moment, wanting to enjoy the beautiful evening; among them were people who did not please Mr. Wohlwend probably because they were old creditors. To be sure, they did not recognise him and even if that were to have occurred it would not have mattered for there were many business men moving around who upon one or more occasions had been in the same shoes as Wohlwend. Because of that they were not annoyed. It was not particularly agreeable to him now, however, since he noticed that the men began to look eagerly at Miss Myrrha Glawicz, and for this same reason it was convenient for Martin Salander to start home. They harnessed up and with the approaching dusk they drove off.

When they reached the city it was night. Martin took the Wohlwend family as far as their street and then he walked home, with slow steps, sometimes with lowered head, sometimes looking at the stars which individually or in pairs drifted here and there in the heavens over the streets just as slowly as the man below. The old faithful Magdalene who had waited for him opened the door, rejoicing that her master had come after her having managed the house alone the whole day.

'Have you taken care of yourself?' he asked, 'I'll wager that everything was too much for you!'

'Me? You don't know me very well, Mr. Councillor. I've done what seemed best to me. At noontime I had a thick pancake and a hot bacon and lettuce salad as big as a stack of hay, Mr. Councillor! And in the evening I cooked a milk soup with bread and pepper in it, like my mother made a long time ago—may her soul rest in peace. Between times I polished all of the brass in the kitchen, and for that I especially brought up a glass of wine.'

'You don't say!'

'Last year's, of course, which in summer is good for thirst even if it is only new wine. But did you have your supper, Mr. Councillor? Shouldn't I make some tea for you and prepare some cold meat?'

‘I don’t want anything at all.’

‘Just to console yourself. Your wife certainly is still sitting with her children at Lautenspiel and they’re chattering and enjoying themselves. The poor children! How they did make their beds and now they have to lie in them. But youth doesn’t have any virtues, and I had to help along! Fortunate is he who has got over it, that evil thing, and no longer has a restless heart. What a jackass I am!’

Martin Salander did not hear any more and he sent the servant to bed. But not until after she had left the room did he hear the words: ‘Fortunate is he who no longer has a restless heart,’ as one often absent-mindedly hears things spoken which already have faded away like a shout in the fields.

He did not pay any attention to it but took the candle and walked over to the bedroom where it was quiet, quiet as a grave. His wife’s mirror reflected the flickering candle which, partially from his heavy steps, partially from a gentle breeze, burned restlessly. Salander stood before the mirror, and holding the light aloft began to scrutinize himself; but as an awe crept over him it seemed as if Marie Salander with serious eyes were looking over his shoulder and, growing pale, fading away. Cursing his excitement he went into the sitting-room where a large well-polished mirror hung and he stood before it.

Martin Salander never was one to be in love with his own face, and he admired it in the mirror just as little as he did in pictures which the custom of the times demanded be taken. He was in his fifty-fifth year, and, to be sure, did not appear older than the majority of his contemporaries who maintained themselves well, but in no way did he appear as young as one of those lucky fellows who always remains forty-two years old. His hair was still full and even bushy; at one time it had been blond but now was as powdered as a field of corn on which the late hoar frost had fallen. His curly beard very likely concealed more than one sinewy furrow on his throat and lower jaw, which was to be concluded from those appearing as mild wrinkles on the upper part of the face. The mental youth and good-natured vigour which in spite of this animated that same face and eyes he himself could not understand nor account for, and so he found himself neither elated nor cheered by the night-time reflection.

So be it, he said, as he quickly put the candlestick away and

threw himself into one of the easy chairs. I could have known that, and the fact that I'm an old fellow belongs precisely to the question which disturbs me. I still have to produce and work and I still need a mouthful of that spring air which rejuvenates the heart. Good Marie—there is no question of unfaithfulness in the common sense of the word. Better people than I have beautified and enlarged their years with the companionship of a woman. Affection?—some may call it love; and hasn't she laughed in advance, and laughed how lovingly when I told her about the beautiful Myrrha that first time? Myrrha!—would she be able to put up with me? Will she be able to feel and want to be what she can mean to me? Fate is at work here and it will pass this way or that! To guide it sensibly is up to me; it will soon be over and done with if it is not what I wish it to be, and, if it is so, may the path remain smooth and sunlit and may no one stumble.

He lost himself in sweet dreams—in the enjoyment of a youthful affection for the rare creature and in a friendship which would, far from provoking a scandal, offer a delightful experience; and in an uncertain future he saw Myrrha's life flowing along in an orderly manner, led by the hand of a man worthy of her, freed from the uncanny ties in which she now was ensnared.

Not for one single moment did he think of his unlucky daughters whose love-dreams he, even though human, could judge so clearly. But he could differentiate between his age and theirs still less, and even less than that between their situation at the time and his own. And he suspected even less than that how obvious it now had become that the girls had inherited from no one else but from their father the trait to be prone to such fixed ideas. And what a tragi-comical spectacle it was afterward to see the poor man illustrate the fact so vividly.

In no way did he consider further how such an ideal love affair of a staid, elderly man presupposes, as the main object, a feminine creature gifted with an unusual mind, and he, lacking any concept of Myrrha's inner-self, created an idealistic picture of it. And this was all the more dangerous, since it signified that in this too a self-delusion prevailed and that the beautiful affection was based merely on a sensual stimulus.

In his present state of mind Martin Salander was not conscious of all this but, nevertheless, it was present inside as well as outside of him, and it oppressed his soul as if he were con-

sciously contemplating it, for the soul was, after all, always at home like a dutiful housewife. Therefore, when he sought rest at last, around midnight, he fell into an uneasy sleep in which his soul scurried around like a *Poltergeist*.

In the morning he awakened from that sleep with a heavy heart and as he became aware of that oppressiveness and as a deep sigh escaped, he said: 'Aha, now we've got it! A passion! A passion! O God! Why did that have to happen to me now?'

And so he took the restlessness of his old conscience for the beginning of a belated flowering of love, and he suffered its pangs like a young man but with the sorrow of an aged father who lies down full of sorrows for his family, and with sighs sees the day dawn.

Within a short time and with astonishment he became aware of how young he had felt before this unfortunate adventure and how now he had to think daily of his years. Never before had it been so necessary for him to forget them, not only because of his uncomfortable passion, of course, but also because of the general state of world affairs.

With every day and with every hour the summer became noisier, more lusty as it were, because of an enormous number of large and small festivities, occasions, tours and trips made by clubs and societies in all directions, extending into autumn; it was as if under any pretences the entire population were on the move—villagers and city neighbours, columns of young men, little groups of old men fifty, sixty, seventy years of age and hundreds of children's schools with their fluttering pennants. Now and then one of these groups of children stopped in the sunshine until their superintendent came out of the celebrated beer parlour in which he had quickly taken shelter. An uninformed stranger could have asked who besides some of the inn-keepers really worked in this region during the summer, because he did not think that enough remained at home to accomplish anything; but even of those who wandered some did enough beforehand and afterward to be able to afford this joy. And sure enough, ever-new columns would meet on the paths and soon would disappear.

Nevertheless, if one remembered the complaints over the bad times and the constantly increasing needs of the people, then even the natives did not quite comprehend it, for where did they

get the money which they spent in their merry-making? Bands of Catholic pilgrims moving among the worldly pleasure-seekers could have told him, however, that in earlier times still more of the people had wandered and feasted and that they did this especially in times of want.

In former times Martin Salander had contributed towards the aforesaid festive joy whenever a patriotic, educational or progressive idea could be put into it; then the growing flood began to disconcert him and he voiced a word of moderation. At the present time when abundance reigned in the land he again changed his mind. He did not want to be on the side of crabbed age and, pricked by the amorous demands of youth, he himself set about into the throng and was to be seen here and there behind the billowing flags wearing a badge in his button hole, a silk arm band or at least an Alpine rose on his hat. He thought that with his renewed youth he would enjoy the flowering of his fatherland in this manner, and for the giver of his youth he reserved a place of honour next to him at the banquet tables. In spite of this as he went to bed each night a sigh could be heard.

Once when he was alone he said that for the ideal love *l'amour est le vrai recommenceur*! That indeed is a true saying; it makes even the old republic come to life again for me.

The setting sun, which just shone in on the banqueting, sparkled on the gilded inside of a large chalice which stood before him freshly filled with red wine, and the sheen of the gold glistened with indescribable magic in the transparent purple flood.

Martin fastened his eyes on those sparkling colours which suddenly had appeared out of an open sky and seemed to stamp his thoughts as if with flaming sealing wax. A reddish gleam strode out of the beaker and over his inspired face. One of the charming women sitting opposite him noticed this and mentioned it to him with the warning that he ought not move since he looked very handsome now. Flattered, he held his face in a fixed position for a while until the reflection began to flicker exactly like the wine in the cup, for a slight shaking went up and down the width and breadth of the small table which shook the contents of the goblet.

But the shaking was originated by two plain-clothes policemen unexpectedly ordering one of the merry-makers to get up

and go out with them; because of his resistance the lightly constructed table was pushed when they laid their hands on the man and forced him to rise. Growing pale, he obeyed and followed them but not without removing as surreptitiously as possible from his black clothes various decorations consisting of rosettes, ribbons and silver emblems. He was not only decorated with the universal festival badge of the day, but since he had struck up several friendships he also wore special club medals which he had exchanged with others.

Only a few were aware of the event, among them Salander, whom the men and his escorts had to pass, and he shuddered when he saw very clearly how that unfortunate one removed the honoured tokens of joy and tried to slip them into his pocket. It seemed to him no less terrible than when a high officer is deprived of his sword and medals in front of the whole regiment.

Not until the man had disappeared did the rumour of the cause of the arrest spread over the tables. He was a well-known and popular visitor of festivals and he was an administrator in some flourishing firm, enjoying great confidences; he was always happy and jolly wherever he went and only lately, now and then, tried to cut short a rising sigh by humming a few bars of a song or drumming with his fingers on the table, or with a loud thump of the glass attempting to conceal wandering thoughts. Such observations were now exchanged after it was learned that during his absence from the firm a maze of embezzlements in which he was involved was discovered, and at the same time it was established how he had inquired of immigration agents about sailing opportunities. In his thoughtlessness, as a last beautiful recollection, he was not able to deny himself the pleasure of attending the festival before his flight since, after all, an orderly citizen endeavours to form even the disagreeable into a neat verse for his memory book.

Now put out of sorts, Salander left the celebration and travelled back directly to Münsterburg. After he had shared the evening meal with his wife he picked up the newspaper and the first item he read was the report of a cashier in the west committing the same crime.

'What kind of an unlucky day is this?' he cried, shaking his head and relating what he himself had witnessed at the festivities.

'Of course, it's not a patriotic thought,' he said, 'but, never-

theless, I'm pleased that these unhappy events have not happened in our canton.'

'Just read to the end,' Marie replied, 'in the supplement there are some more nice things.'

There Martin read that an actuary, Schimmel by name, as a result of a succession of embezzlements and bribes of which he was suspected, was on this very day taken into custody in Münsterburg.

'By God, that's beginning to hit a little bit close to home,' said Salander as he threw the paper away. 'I helped that fellow to his position by my recommendation. Of course, I've regretted that because he immediately behaved like a bragging and brazen individual and made a spectacle of his patriotism, but I didn't think of him as being dishonest. Now I remember having heard how it was noticed, unfavourably, that he always ate at the common table at the inn instead of at home with his wife and children where it was too simple for him. There the scoundrel lies!'

Following this chilling blast the rest of the week remained free of such annoying things; the story of a young man who had disappeared with seven hundred francs appeared all by itself in Saturday's evening paper and no attention was paid to it. All the more violently the stormy weather broke loose again on the next Monday when a few firms of money-lenders began to totter because of the misappropriations and dishonest leadership of the directors, and this affected great numbers. Perhaps the reasons lay in the blind greediness of rich people who have relinquished their abundance to the seemingly lucky hands of such moral nincompoops. On Tuesday a company of departed souls who as poor wage earners maintained a well-regulated game of speculation from the vaults of their superiors whirled through the air. On Wednesday an old treasurer who yearly allowed the inspectors to count the same heap of sawed-off broomsticks wrapped as money rolls rode along on the dark cloud of disaster. On Thursday there was a member of a board of directors who weekly placed a small briefcase on the green table and, putting his fist upon it, said: 'Gentlemen, here is my honour and every desirable proof of what has been transacted!' The other members fluttered after him like wounded ducks because no one ever dared to pull the little case away from under his fist or even to say only 'May I?' for they were superstitious, and as often as

anyone made a move he would stretch his two fingers far apart as if he would cast a spell over them. When he had disappeared without a trace the little briefcase remained behind on the table. It contained nothing but a tall column of given numbers which had been crossed out, one after another, with black, blue or red ink, with pencil or with silver crayon depending on the time of day and the place of perdition. On Friday a community *factotum* came around who, except for a small sum which he had consumed in drink, had invested the proceeds of the sale of a beautiful larch forest in the lotteries of all countries. On Saturday a guardian of seven rich orphans—who are now poor—drowned himself. On Sunday it was again a day of rest.

But on Monday the dance began anew and it continued thus for several weeks so that the midservants in the streets in the mornings when they went to get the newspapers, and the men at their morning beer were heard to shout after reading the news: 'They've caught one again! Another one!' Because of the awakened and growing mistrust the investigations increased and drove a small army of medium and small officials into the light, all of whom had found it impossible to keep entrusted property without laying hands on it. And that pernicious disease spread through the entire land without regard to religion or language barriers. Only, perhaps, in the mountains where the customs had remained more simple and the cash or the value of money more rare not much was heard of.

Martin Salander was continually astonished and he brooded anew as he reflected upon the possibilities of the sad fact that the malady of the times had not stopped at the boundary of the republic whose spiritual and ethical growth he had helped cultivate so faithfully. Nevertheless, this was something other than that question of communication which he at one time had bluntly given the facts of to the people.

His heart became truly troubled, a circumstance advantageous to him because now when he went to bed and heaved a sigh—since he was under this mental pressure—it was possible for him to tell his wife the reason for it when she asked. The 'beautiful passion,' to be sure, had its share in it also, however, but for the time being it did not dare venture further.

CHAPTER 16

ONE SUNDAY MORNING as the sound of bells was fading away and the gentle quiet of that hour was entering unnoticed, Marie Salander took a book in hand. She was alone in the house and needed only to be left to herself before she would begin to muse. It came like a refreshing breeze from an open window.

However, she did not sit alone for long. For some time now her husband had done away with the practice of having the street door locked continuously because he considered it to be too aristocratic, hostile to the people and suspicious—this in spite of the ever-increasing house-prowls by countless wandering tramps who pilfered the hard-earned year's wages from the attic rooms of servant girls. On holidays, however, this species of thieves usually did not work; only in the beginning of such times Mr. Salander had had a new umbrella stolen from the entrance hall. What interrupted his wife today in her Sunday peace was a clumsy knocking on the door of the room in which she was sitting. When she went to open it Mrs. Amalie Weidelich stepped inside. With both hands she held a hymnal and the white handkerchief which, after the custom of women in rural areas, lay on the book cleanly folded.

'Excuse me,' she said, 'and good day, Mrs. Salander.'

'Why, Mrs. Weidelich!' Frau Marie greeted her, surprised. 'After such a long time we finally see each other again. Did you get to church too late?'

'No, I was early enough but since I can't get away all week long, and it's always less and less the older I get, instead of resting on the way I told myself that after church I'd go round and pay a visit to the esteemed Salanders. I usually attend one of the city churches where it's always very full and interesting and the people nail their visiting cards to the seats. But today I thought I can make an exception—one time doesn't count—the sermons won't be turned off like the fountains, and next Sunday the water of life will still be running. But at

other times one certainly has use for it, my dear Mrs. Salander. Of course, I don't always understand correctly what it's aiming at since I'm just not educated, but I do it in honour of my sons who are learned gentlemen. It should not be said that their Mama is not to be seen at an intellectual service. They don't really deserve that! But, after all, I am the mother! And then when from the pulpit they speak of the dear God who has no legs and doesn't know us personally, and we're still supposed to show off our child-like love for the Father, then I let it go at that and pray our Lord's Prayer all the more fervently. I now understand that better than I did before, dear Mrs. Salander; I'm not like our beloved God for I'm beginning to feel my legs and they're getting tired!'

'Then do sit down at last, my good woman; there's a comfortable, soft arm-chair standing there. Don't you want to take off that magnificent hat? Who made it?'

With these words Marie Salander repressed the bitter feeling which the unexpected appearance of the twins' mother had awakened within her: from her facial expression as well as from the words of the woman she understood that she was not as cheerful as she had been previously. Mrs. Weidelich sat down cautiously, taking care of her dress.

'The hat?' she said, 'Merklin made it but it's much too pretty and it turned out to be too expensive. It isn't becoming to me anymore. I don't want to take it off; it's too much trouble to put it back on the way it belongs.'

Now she regarded the other mother-in-law and praised her appearance. 'Things are going well for you, you always remain the same. And what's the master doing; is he at home?'

'My husband went out in the country early this morning; now he'll be at the office for an hour or two. How's Mr. Weidelich? Is he well?'

'Well enough, praise the Lord; his work keeps him going though he doesn't take care of himself enough and he complains of listlessness now and then. Everyone has his own lot! For example, we don't know what to make of our sons; to speak frankly, I've come to find out whether you have more news of the children and what's happening.'

'What do you mean, happening?' Frau Marie asked, not half so surprised as alarmed.

'Well, something must be happening or it has happened. Our sons who, unfortunately, no longer care much for us come running only occasionally. Previously they came together now and then, but now they seem to avoid each other; and if they meet unexpectedly at our house they chatter a little and one or the other so arranges it that he leaves. But when one appears alone—that's happened a half year ago or longer—and we ask him about his brother, the answer always is: "Don't know anything about him, haven't seen him. I see very little of him these days!" That's Isidor's reply and it's also Julian's. And yet they're always somewhere here in the city where they have business to attend to; several times each week we have to hear it said that they were seen here and there, and they would have to meet one another. So they ought not say that they don't know anything about the other. Then we said, I and my husband, Mr. Salander and his wife through their daughters are better informed; after all, it can't be very serious otherwise we'd know about it. So today I made a detour and came to you.'

Mrs. Salander, astonished, remained silent a moment while she considered whether she should inform Mrs. Weidelich of the similar experiences they had had with their daughters in the past. It could only contribute to their better enlightenment, she thought, if they had knowledge of it, which obviously they were lacking completely.

'Our daughters,' she said, 'have not confided in us in these matters probably because they are unknown to them; lately we have heard only incidentally from them that the young men are frequently absent.'

'Naturally, I believe that,' Amalie Weidelich interjected, 'because of their work; there's nothing mysterious about that. Otherwise the young ladies know nothing?'

'Not this time and not of these circumstances.'

'What "this time and what circumstances"? But another time you knew? Have they told you, ha?'

As Marie was not able to answer immediately, with an eager voice the other mother continued more tensely:

'Just be frank and don't withhold anything. We've also spoken about whether domestic difficulties and the like are present, whether the young wives can adjust themselves or perhaps are discontented and make life difficult for their men at home. You

mustn't be offended, Mrs. Salander; one has examples of where two sisters who have both married into the same family stick together and, if they're quarrelling with their husbands, like to plot with each other and they are capable of putting everything topsy-turvy. I don't want to imply anything, I only want to trace the whole affair.'

After reflecting once more Marie Salander decided without further hesitation that it was the time to help her visitor onto this track.

'Look here, Frau Weidelich,' she said quietly and seriously, as far as her inner agitation allowed, 'certainly everything is not as it should be, there you're right! Now I'll tell you that only recently we experienced something similar with our daughters as you have with your sons. They didn't show themselves at all at home. It was as if they had fled their parents' home deliberately; when that finally struck us we racked our brains because we had heard it third or fourth hand that the children had lost all contact with each other and were afraid of meeting. Then we also set out, my husband and I, but we went directly to our daughters and took them to task.'

'And? What was the matter?'

'We found both of them at home alone and in deep melancholy; each was homesick for her parents and for her sister, and yet she did not dare see those whom they would have liked so much to see. On that same day we brought them together again with each other and with us, and helped them, as well as we were able, to overcome the strangeness.'

'But what had happened? Did it concern my sons?' the impatient washerwoman asked.

'Since you want to know I have to tell you; it will perhaps serve as a temporary smoothing out of the mistakes or misunderstandings, and will, perhaps, help as a general knowledge of one's self. My daughters have regretted their marriage and for that reason were ashamed of each other since, with great perseverance, they committed the supposed mistake in partnership; and they were ashamed before us because we did not like to have the marriage take place.'

'So?' poor Mrs. Weidelich said slowly, drawing out the word, having become greatly concerned and pale for, in spite of her pointed speech before, the disclosures struck her as unexpectedly

as a bolt out of the blue. She felt the edifice totter which she had erected with so much care and art, and which represented her sons' lives. Her first thought was of the large inheritance, the great sum of money, and the second that there were not even children.

As she recovered somewhat from her fright, more dejected than defiant she questioned further about what great grounds the women had to regret their marriage, and with so much fuss. Without further reflection Frau Marie replied:

'Yes, that's the strange thing, but in time it may well wear off because it will have to be tolerated. They say that nothing can be done about the young men because they have no souls.'

Blushing, Mrs. Weidelich shook her head so hard that her hat with all its flowers and ribbons trembled; forgetting her weary legs she sprang from her chair and, mortally offended, shouted:

'No souls? My two boys whom I carried under my heart? That's vile slander! I brought them into the world well formed and round, like two trout, with not the slightest blemish from their little heads to their little feet; I have given each his soul from my own immortal soul—so much as there was room to be found in such tiny specks of life—and as they themselves have grown so it too has grown. Where should it have gone? Would they have become county clerks? No souls? The silly geese! They can't speak to me that way! Oh!'

She was so angry that she could no longer continue speaking and she had to sit down again. Marie Salander regretted her action, and because the woman had become very pale she looked for her box containing the smelling salts. But Frau Weidelich refused the drops and asked instead for a sip of wine, if there was any, for she felt truly miserable.

Silently, Mrs. Salander went to the cupboard in which things of that nature stood ready for all occasions. During the ensuing silence heavy steps were heard on the stairs and in the hall, and immediately thereafter a man with hard knuckles rapped on the door. Mrs. Salander hurriedly left the cupboard to see who was there, for with the first clumsy knocks the woman now again imagined that someone was knocking who really did not want to come in.

But it was Father Jacob Weidelich who was standing there with a troubled look on his face, and when Marie Salander

opened the door wide he entered as if he were not sure of himself. In his absent-mindedness he did not take off his hat until after he had sat down, like an exhausted man, on the nearest chair and without saying a word.

'Excuse me,' he said at last, pulling himself together, 'I had wanted to speak to Mr. Salander, isn't he home? But—why, that's my wife over there! I thought you were in church!'

'And you, Jacob, how is it that you're here?' she cried, forgetting her own complaints at the sight of him. He was wearing his usual Sunday clothes though they were put on with unconscious haste. His waistcoat was buttoned unevenly, he had forgotten his necktie and in his hand he held his faded workday hat around which showed, in place of the lost ribbon, a crown of the sweat of labour which had penetrated the felt. Mrs. Salander also saw all this and, in addition, that his hands shook lightly. Somewhat anxiously awaiting what was yet to come she remained silently apart and allowed the Weidelichs to do the talking. Mrs. Weidelich had risen to her feet and had come closer to her husband, examining his careless attire.

'What is this?' she cried. 'How can you run off without a tie? And you didn't even button your shirt collar! Storming around the city on a Sunday wearing your old hat, shame on you!'

But when she saw the helpless state of his features more closely, a fright ran through her. She knew that he would not get in such a state, one in which she had never seen him before, because of a mere trifle.

'What's happened, Jacob?' she asked, pale with fear since the unknown which had driven her usually calm husband out of the house seemed doubly fearsome to her.

He tried to dry his damp forehead but did not find a handkerchief in his coat pocket. His wife looked around and spied the hymnal with her handkerchief in it lying on the table. She opened the book and she herself wiped off his forehead and temples. Weidelich took the handkerchief from her hand and somewhat more calmly attempted to explain what was troubling him.

'Our son Isidor is in the city—in the name of God I must tell you he's in prison under terrible suspicion, awaiting trial—they brought him in last night.'

With a little shriek Marie Salander sought the support of the nearest window sill; she saw only her poor daughter, Setti, who

must now be sitting in Lautenspiel abandoned and frightened—perhaps herself held in custody or at least guarded.

But Isidor's mother stood with her mouth open, staring at her husband. She did not comprehend what he had said.

'What could he have done?' she stuttered. 'That must be some fine piece of foolishness, they ought to be careful!'

'It's no joke, you poor woman,' said Jacob Weidelich, who now stood up and tried to assuage his grief in walking and speaking. 'One of the authorities came to the house as soon as you had gone and notified me of the misfortune. With our cousin and good Father Ulrich I had furnished bond for both sons.* Because of that the magistrate questioned me regarding my solvency and asked me to keep the sum ready for any eventuality; not only that, he wanted to know what I would be capable of affording beyond that sum, although it doesn't look as if a peaceful settlement could be possible out of court since a great and dreadful disorder has been found with our Isidor. In terror and fright I didn't know what to say other than that I would do what I was able to do if it could help; I ran here to ask Mr. Salander for advice as to what is to be done for the protection of our son. I can't believe that he, how shall I say it, could have forgotten himself in such a manner. In the confusion I didn't even understand the details. I would never have believed that this could have happened to me!'

Suddenly his wife burst out with a shrill laugh and, as if she were going into a darkened room, with out-stretched hands fumbled for the arm-chair which she had left shortly before. There she drew some breath, again laughed in fits and starts and then bitterly called over to her husband:

'But it can happen to me? It doesn't hurt me, after all, I've earned it, isn't that right? All your life you think only about yourself! A beautiful world; a good Sunday! First it was that the boys have no souls, then they were imprisoned and made into scoundrels! Oh, oh, oh how terrible!'

Her words were lost in a miserable complaining sound and the sound, in turn, in a renewed sick-faint which overcame her; Weidelich meanwhile, had again sat down and was staring at the floor, his hands supported on his knees.

* At the time when the twins were first appointed notaries because they were still minors.

Mrs. Marie Salander, although she was not in good spirits herself, seized the aforementioned bottle of elixir and filled a large goblet for the couple who had become so weak. And like the mother of Isidor who had included both of her sons in his person and was able to think only of them, so Marie Salander thought only of her two daughters but did so without speaking of them since the grieving parents of her sons-in-law could not devote their attention now to the young women.

Amalie Weidelich drank a good swallow of the wine, and holding the glass out in the air as if she were setting it down allowed it to fall to the floor.

'So Isidor is locked up,' she said, 'and no longer can go wherever he wishes. Does someone bring him food and drink whenever he wants it and it is the time for it—as it is just now? Do they also have something fitting for a clerk, a member of the council? For a poor man who doesn't know what hunger and thirst is?'

'As far as I can recall,' observed Mrs. Salander, 'as long as the investigation lasts and until they are sentenced such prisoners are able to have, at their own expense, whatever they desire and have been accustomed to.'

'Are sentenced! I don't want to hear such a word from anyone. If bad devils of all kinds whom he has dealt with have sown weeds in his affairs, so that he sometimes has not known where to turn, he surely will explain that and it will be a bad ending for his persecutors. But now it should be seen to that he's lacking nothing. Why hadn't his wife come with him to watch over him and to be near him?'

'She will be watching at home since otherwise no one will be there,' Marie Salander replied dully, holding back her anger.

'Then we have to attend to it; did you hear me Jacob? We'll go over there, or you go alone and bring him some money in case they've robbed him of his! In the meantime I'll walk home and prepare some food and drink. Don't you hear me?'

Father Weidelich, unfortunately, did not hear. Incessantly, he brooded over the thought that dishonesty and crime in the person of his own son had approached him and, moreover, that his entire modest wealth which he had acquired in so many years of drudgery should go up in smoke, and he would stand there poorer than he had been in the very beginning. The Finch he had obtained a long time ago, but only with the help of a small in-

heritance from his father. And if it came to that, could he, in his old age, begin at the beginning? May it please God that it will not come to that. It could not be!

Since he persisted in such a manner in his brooding, and because there was no answer forthcoming, his wife forgot her plan and fell back thoroughly confused.

Marie Salander utilised the prevailing silence by getting a glass of fresh water and then by sitting quietly in a corner, intending to win not only a moment to compose herself but also to entice the Weidelichs, who had been seized by disaster, to take a short rest. For a half hour she succeeded in having the stillness unbroken except for a groan or sigh.

With more rapid strides than usual her husband approached. When she heard him she thanked heaven; nevertheless she was shocked by his appearance which gave testimony to his sorrow and great anger.

'Here we are now, all together,' he said, standing in the room, 'obviously you already know the news!'

'Yes, unfortunately!' declared Father Weidelich, who upon Salander's arrival had awakened and had arisen. 'I've come here first of all, Mr. Salander, to ask you for advice as to what I should do. I hope that it's not as bad as it looked during that first shock.'

'It's bad enough!' replied Salander, who observed Weidelich's distracted state and also that of his wife. With her face averted she was apparently sitting in her arm-chair indifferent to what was happening; Frau Marie, who came out of her corner, pointed her out to her husband. The latter, not in a very considerate mood, tried to express himself more sympathetically.

'The minor official who came to you,' he continued, face to face with Weidelich, 'also came to me at my office. He seemed to be a rash, zealous individual; it struck me as being strange that he was not able to give more exact information, and especially because he ran around on a Sunday with such matters. He also wanted to learn from me what I, in any event, would intend to do for my son-in-law so that criminal proceedings would not take place. That is a good thought which, however, for the time being, will not suffice for a decree. I went away in order to learn from an appropriate source more definite information. It is not a question of negligence and things of that nature whose consequences could be beat down. By the misuse of his office Isidor

had undertaken such unbelievably daring transactions that the disclosure always hung by a hair and finally happened during the past week. The auditing of the books in his office lasted for three days. Yesterday the one hundred and fifty thousand franc total was passed and there is supposed to be still no end in sight. That is why the proceedings were broken off in Unterlaub and removed to Münsterburg.'

The lamenting cry, 'Oh, Lord Jesus!' was heard coming from Mother Weidelich's chair of pain. Father Jacob again looked for his chair. The sun illuminated the situation for him as if it had been a fire. Even Martin Salander grew weary, as did his wife, Marie, and, as chance would have it, those four ageing people sat silently.

After a long time Mrs. Weidelich whimpered:

'Had I only gone to church then I would have had one more hour in which I would have known nothing! That would have been a good little hour, and I could have gone home in good spirits without having it written all over me.'

Again after a few minutes she cried:

'But now it has to be! Jacob, we ought to go so that we get under cover.'

Since she arose quickly, as well as she could, her husband pulled himself together and, a broken man, approached Salander who likewise had risen.

'I'm sorry,' he said wearily, 'that we make so much trouble for you——'

His voice failed him and he became silent. Martin offered him his hand for he saw how the man suffered and, forgetting his own sorrows, said to him with doubtful consolation, to be sure:

'Who in these days can assert that he is safe from the common misery? It's like plant lice or cholera. If someone looks askance at you all you have to do is tell him to go home to see if the affliction's not already there.'

In the meantime Amalie Weidelich was concerning herself with her hat which, because of the agitation of the woman, was awry and did not want to sit right any more. Standing before the mirror, where she tried to push it back into place and fasten it, Marie Salander came to her assistance. All of a sudden she tore it from her head and explained that she did not want to try any more and she would go home hatless.

In this manner the couple set out. They were scarcely out on the street than the woman felt so weak that Father Jacob had to lead her by the arm; in his left hand he carried the fine gaily-coloured hat by its ribbons, like a basket. His own thread-bare, sweat-stained hat completed the strange dress of the couple who swayed sadly to and fro because of the uncertain walk of the woman who never before had swayed like this, not even from the many glasses of wine which she had drunk.

People watched them; passersby even stood still and someone said to another, which could be heard distinctly: 'They've breakfasted well!'

With their sharp ears they heard this new disgrace but looked neither to the right nor left. On a spacious bridge it was even more difficult since a large group of church people were crossing from both sides and almost all of them looked at the hat which was hanging from Jacob Weidelich's left hand, and then at the somewhat dishevelled hair of his wife.

'Give me my hat, Jacob!' she said, 'it isn't proper that you carry it.'

He consented and gave her that grand piece of fashion and, as at this moment they were crowded against the bridge railings, without looking at it the woman threw it into the stream.

'What are you doing? Are you mad?' her husband whispered.

'Just go on! Don't stand still!' she said. 'I've had enough of splendour.'

Thus they continued onward and were given a wide berth. The nearest of those people crossing the bridge who had seen her throw the hat hurried across to the other side and there turned to the people on that side telling them to look at the hat floating past under the bridge; when the others saw it the movement was transmitted, and all along the bridge everyone ran as if possessed to that side and looked into the water. On the smoothly flowing ripples the miserable hat floated downstream like a little boat decorated with silk flags and garlands of flowers, or like a floating garden. But in a short time two boys pushed out in a boat used for rescues and quickly steered towards the unsteady craft, either to capture it for themselves or, at least, to earn some spending money since ever new spectators appeared on both banks.

Meanwhile, the distressed parents of the twins were able to get up to the Finch unrecognised.

'That you don't care to put your hat on any more,' Weidelich began, 'in a way I find easy to believe, but you could have sold it. I fear that the time is approaching when we have to count every franc.'

'It's over and done with,' Amalie sighed. 'I scarcely knew what I was doing. Anyway, there are still many things here that I can sell—my skirt, the watch and chain—they aren't suitable anymore because they attract the attention of others. And I won't wear the brooch anymore, the one with the two little boys on it. No, I can't sell it—even if they cannot do right anymore and are lost to us. Oh, but it was a happy time! No, I'll keep the little picture and the gold on it as long as we still have a crust of bread.'

She was in tears as she spoke, interrupted by her sobs. Jacob, frightened and sorrowful, urged her to compose herself.

'How can you speak that way, all at once throwing both sons into one? If the one who is now under arrest is not to be saved we still have Julian who, if it is the will of God, will not be in similar circumstances.'

'You don't know them as I, who brought them into the world, do. Since that time they always thought, wished and did the same, and each one knew what the other wanted. Oh, Lord, Lord God, now I too know why they have avoided one another and always said, "I don't know; I haven't seen him!" They knew exactly that they were both travelling the same path and were doing the same thing, and because it was something wicked and dangerous they shunned one another. Just imagine, Mrs. Salander, whom I went to this morning to ask if she didn't know what it could be, related quite casually that her daughters had acted similarly, that they had both fled from each other and from their parents, and do you know why? Because they were ashamed in front of their parents as well as before each other. Yes, ashamed!'

'For what reason? What had they done?'

'They were ashamed because they had married our sons! How clearly I now understand our boys; the poor wretches, who as twin brothers had feared each other in their evil doings and neither wished that the other would speak of his affair. To me it's as if I were looking into the middle of their hearts.'

'It is pitiful luck that we're living to see this happening to our sons; the longer it is the sadder it becomes and the more incomprehensible. I'd almost rather that I hadn't lived.'

‘As I see it, everything must be paid for,’ his wife replied, ‘except death—that can be had for nothing. Here is our old house; thank God that in our vanity we haven’t built a new one in its place although the two of us were always industrious and active in it and were never ashamed of our labour. Even today we’ll keep well hidden and quiet and act as though it would remain that quiet and still for all eternity. The servants couldn’t have heard anything yet. But tomorrow’s Monday and they have to get the week’s wash from all corners of the city, then they’ll certainly hear of it; on Tuesday my washerwomen come, four of them. A bitter week this first one. Come, Jacob, we should be going inside and remain quiet. At least the dear God doesn’t notice it since, as the great preacher said, He doesn’t know us personally. It’s fortunate, indeed, that He, therefore, can’t ask us about our children because He hasn’t the faintest idea of it—as our merry sons used to say whenever somebody was ignorant of some fact. Come inside!’

It was as if the poor woman, feeling as though it were necessary, wanted to talk herself alive again to save face before the people living in her house. She even acquired a little presence of mind, for as soon as she was in the entrance hall she suddenly reached up to her head and, unseen, went first to the back room as if she wanted to put her fine Sunday hat there.

Martin Salander and his wife did not leave their house any more that day either. After the Weidelichs had gone and they were alone, Martin said:

‘This has been a remarkable day for me! Early this morning as I was having my hair cut a man sitting next to me was being shaved. He looked through the window out upon the street, always just in the direction in which the barber turned his face—once this way and once the other—so that occasionally his eyes were turned towards the sky or towards the ceiling of the shop. When he was finished he arose, dried his face with the towel and said that while his beard was being trimmed he had seen, now and then, not less than four good acquaintances pass by on the pavement before the window, each of whom at the present time had a relative in prison. That was a little too many during one beard trimming. And yet he had not, by far, seen all the people who passed by because the barber had pulled his face, by his nose tip or chin, to one side every moment. He had perhaps over-

looked several or had not recognised them because the blue screen on the window obscured the figures somewhat. I had to laugh in spite of all the misery, and now it all has come back to me.'

'If what happened were not so disgraceful,' Marie replied, 'I'd rejoice that we could again have our daughters at home, for now it would not be a question of whether or not they would be free.'

'Naturally, that is if they don't fall into some new foolishness, namely that they think they have to, before the world, cling to their wedded husbands in all their misfortunes, whatever they may be, and to seek reward in the consciousness of a gallantly offered mercy. One has, indeed, examples of that.'

'You forget that before this a little spark of love, which has long since been extinguished, would be required.'

'I admit you may be right. All the better! But we already are speaking of both gentlemen and it has never been said that Master Julian, the bird catcher, will go the same way as his brother. He could have been, if not more decent, yet more cautious, more cunning or have had more luck.'

'I'm certain that he'll overtake the other sooner than we think. Why should he be different in just this respect?'

'All the worse for me!' Salander said in an ill-humoured manner, 'or rather for all of us! If one of them is ruined so miserably it's not the same as both going down; only then will the conspicuous double-wedding which I had arranged and by which, as everybody knows, I had come into the council and which will be a sneering proverb longer than we live, be brought to the fore. In this way I have caused harm to my political party affiliation and to the cause of the people in general, instead of having aided them. And our daughters will go around like living monuments to the confounded story. And then there's Arnold! Already in those days one spoke only of the Salander wedding, and now when he finally returns home if he wants to work in public I shall have hung a pretty millstone around his neck.'

'Such fears I've never had,' Marie replied pensively. 'You're not standing on such treacherous footing, and as far as Arnold is concerned he'll always find his good name, which he needs. Only I must confess that as much as I wished his return I still would be frightened if he were to blunder right into the middle of this scandal. Oh, these wicked scoundrels!'

'Because of that we don't want to forget about poor Setti who at this very hour is sitting helpless in her sad Lautenspiel,' said Salander whose thoughts were turned to the fate of his daughter by those last words. 'I'd go to Unterlaub at once if I thought it would do any good. In a few days she'll be on her own and probably will be glad if no one comes. She doesn't need a legal advisor yet, since the situation is simple. The money that we had given her has, of course, vanished; that part of the dowry which still remains can't be taken from her. So I think in the meantime we'll send a telegram, if only to show we're thinking of her. She may answer that we should come and get her and when! it won't be long until she must leave, for, in any event, a bankruptcy is certain and the first thing that will happen is the sale of the land, by auction.'

'Then we'll have to worry about space,' Frau Marie replied, 'if all of a sudden we want to store the two dowries, each of which fills a living-room as large as this. I've worked so hard on it that I don't want to give the stuff away. But now write that telegram so Magdalene can take it immediately. It's getting close to noon and maybe Setti can eat a little better if she has it. Perhaps she's worrying because of us.'

'I'll go myself so that Magdalene won't be disturbed in her cooking,' said Salander. 'Because of these mean expressions of fate I've become hungry!'

'Just stay here!' Marie cried. 'If necessary I can do whatever remains to be done. If you were to go you'd perhaps meet a pack of good friends and other generous souls who, full of sympathy, would pump you and before your eyes would telegraph what you had said.'

Salander hesitated. 'God knows you may be right! All of them have already had their early morning glass of beer, including those who know of this. In order to know the whereabouts of some hundred thousand francs a telegram is always worthwhile to a certain type of individual.'

He took a blank form, wrote the laconic words which were required and gave it to his wife. She read the dispatch, thought about it for a moment and then wrote out a new one. Dumb-founded, Martin read it after she had finished. To the nouns and verbs which stood there like hard boulders she had added the little connecting words, but otherwise had not changed anything.

'Why you didn't do anything except add pronouns, articles and some prepositions, etc. Because of that the telegram will merely be three times as expensive,' he said, still surprised.

'I realise well enough that perhaps it's foolish,' she declared modestly, 'but it seems to me that these little trimmings made the message milder, wrapped it in a little cotton so that Setti would have the feeling she were listening to us speak, and that's why I don't regret the higher rate. But I'll sign it myself if you want me to.'

'It's remarkable how right you are!' said Salander who again had read ~~the~~ three or four lines. 'Indeed, all of a sudden it looks fine, as well as affectionate. Where the devil did you get this wonderfully simple, artistic style? No, you have to sign that yourself, it wouldn't have occurred to me, me the old school-master!'

An hour later, as they were seated at the table, they received Setti's reply in which she mentioned the thought of leaving the house in a few days, promising to write a letter first. That arrived on the next morning. It contained a terse announcement of the fright which had taken place, the work of investigation which had gone on day and night and of the officials and experts who had arrived and had conducted continuous inquiries which Isidor had to attend. At first he was haughty and arrogant and otherwise well-mannered; but when the men, among whom were intimate colleagues, all of a sudden and in a casual tone addressed him as Weidelich instead of Mr. Weidelich and ordered him to stand here or there or to sit in a corner and wait until he was called for, and when at last a police officer appeared, stationing himself at the office door, he then realised that he was lost, and, crying, he confessed everything one wanted him to, but not without adding some untruths and being reprimanded for each one. As he was being taken away with all his books and documents he abruptly threw back a short *Adieu* to his wife, with the subjoinder that he was, unfortunately, a prisoner of the state (as if he had carved out something greater and finer for himself), that he hoped to be back soon and that she was to keep the house in order! For some time previously she had received no money with which to run the household, but for each individual expense had had to ask in his office for the necessary coin. Now, with the exception of her wardrobe and of the kitchen, everything was sealed. A trace of her cash was not to be found, although it

was promised that immediately after the appointment of the bankruptcy judge the release of all her personal property would be decreed. That she did not want to be in the house long and if she possessed the little money needed for the trip, with the permission of her parents she would return without delay to where she should never have left.

'Tomorrow is Tuesday,' Salander said. 'I'll get her tomorrow. We'll telegraph immediately that she should pack the most necessary articles and be ready. Does she still have trunks or suitcases? I bet that man has worn them out with all his travelling!'

'I still saw the trunks and other luggage which they had taken along from here,' Marie replied. 'Their husbands always travelled with small valises.'

'You're right! Just like that man Gauchlinger, the official who lives on travelling expenses and year in and year out rushes through the land with an old leather portfolio in which a night-shirt is stuck.'

'By the way, I'd like to go along,' Marie again commenced speaking, 'and I think we could take a coach despite the railway, then we won't have to walk to the station and we'll also be able to load her things immediately. It wouldn't hurt if at that place they see that she still has a home somewhere. And we'll arrive here with the dark so that there won't be any staring. We'll take along a cold meal in case something happens—who knows if she's had something. Then we won't have to stop on our way.'

'I'm in agreement with everything; do as you wish! Since you were opposed to this unhappy marriage you think of everything which someone the likes of me would not think of.'

They carried out the plans, worried over the circumstances in which they would find their daughter. Setti seemed to have lost weight and was pale as well as exhausted but, nevertheless, was more composed than her parents had imagined. The feeling of liberation from the shameful fetters brought about by herself may have unconsciously equalised all other impressions which she had experienced.

Then too she was not alone at Lautenspiel, although the maid and the clerk had gone their own ways. As in a house whose supporter has departed through a rapid death the neighbour women come to console and help the widow, so two or three

esteemed women of Unterlaub had already appeared and had come every day to be kind to her, or at least to make the time pass more quickly for the abandoned official's wife. Two of them were knitting, sitting on the trunk which they had helped to fill and lock; Setti, meanwhile, was scrounging a meal together from what remained of the previous one—tea, bread and butter and pancakes. The little snack which her mother had brought along was extremely welcome. Since the horses would have to be fed Martin sent the coachman to an inn at Unterlaub and charged him with sending out the proper official immediately so that he could lock up the house and put it in the custody of the authorities.

The ladies of the village partook of the impromptu meal for the sake of its unusualness, and they would not allow anyone to keep them from washing the dishes and putting everything in order in the kitchen. Then they poured out the dishwater, polished the sink and leaned the little broom neatly in the corner, for it was an almost new reed broom. Finally, with the rest of the water they carefully extinguished the glowing hearthfire.

The official appeared just in time. He had received the information that he should put his seal onto the last rooms and containers, and, accordingly, he had brought along the items required: sealing wax, cord, seal and even a roll of candles since he was accustomed, occasionally, not even to find the light he needed to carry out his business. And here in the room stood a few beautiful candlesticks which Mrs. Salander had purchased herself. She had thought that one or the other of them, or even both, could be put in the coach, since, after all, they belonged to the wife; after that the seals could be applied. But the mayor explained that the candlesticks must remain until the inventory had been taken because there had been enough confusion already in the neighbourhood—the whole estate seemed to totter as during an earthquake; many without knowing why were afraid of leaving house and yard. The population was very much aroused and told stories of millions which had been lost.

'Light your candle!' Salander said, holding out a match to the official. The latter went about his business, and with the small company moved step by step up to the front door. Martin Salander turned the key in the lock and handed it over to the mayor. They then took leave of the two women, thanking them for the

sympathy and friendliness which they had demonstrated. Touched by this, they had to dry their eyes. Setti was unable to shed any tears; half paralysed by the words of the official she climbed wearily into the coach with her parents and they drove away.

The three who were remaining behind gazed after the coach and then slowly walked back to the village.

'They're well-to-do people,' one of the women said, 'the gentleman certainly would be able to remedy the damage if he wished; in any case, they're straight thinkers.'

'He would be a fool if he were to give one franc!' replied the officer. 'In reality, they who chose such a person as their notary and who claimed a right to do so will have to reimburse me; now the state treasury is left holding the bag and will have to pay for the election fund.'

In the coach there was silence between the three for a long time, until Salander began to speak in a melancholy voice:

'Well, that was a "Lute Song!" Poor child! And when that fine son-in-law had spoken foolishly of cutting down the trees and selling the little estate I had thought that I could certainly buy that charming place, intending it to be our peaceful sanctuary in our old age. Now I wouldn't have it given to me for it would be impossible for us to live there.'

'Setti's sleeping now,' Frau Marie said quietly, 'we ought to let her rest.'

Indeed, since she probably had not closed her eyes very frequently during the past five or six nights the daughter had fallen asleep next to her mother. The father and mother, therefore, remained silent and leaned back in the enclosed carriage in order to contemplate inwardly all the gloomy stories and likewise to fall asleep for a little while.

It was rather dark when the carriage rolled over the pavements of the city of Münsterburg and the parents were awakened by the noise. But Setti awakened only when the conveyance stopped suddenly in front of the house. She was, however, so very drowsy and tired that her father had to lead her, and not until the faithful Magdalene hurried up, lighting the stairway ahead of them, did she fully return to life and she called out cheerfully:

'Why, here I am! Good evening, Magdalene. Just think how glad I am! And I can see that you're well.'

'Thank God I can still manage, dear little Setti. If only all

the children are together soon then we'll be happy again and roast chestnuts as before.'

Nevertheless, she said that somewhat dully as if she did not have a clear conscience, and after opening the door of the living-room for the group she withdrew immediately.

There at the table, her head in her hands, sat sister Netti of Lindenberg. She, too, seemed to be sleeping and had good reason to be since she had spent the previous night without sleep and, towards nightfall, had reached the home of her parents on foot, and naturally she was dead-tired. Her husband, Julian, had not allowed himself to be seen for four days and she was ashamed to speak of it; the clerk who did not question her regarding Julian's absence went to and fro as he pleased, and the serving girl made unfriendly faces at her. Today in the paper she had read the report of her brother-in-law Isidor's disaster, with the additional rumour of a second notary who was being investigated. To be sure, it did not yet concern Julian but, rather, another unfortunate bird who had rubbed his private fortune a little on the trusted possession which ran through his hands in order to, as is said, pollinate it. But she was able to think only of her husband and of the public misfortune into which the domestic one had been changed and which involved the entire family. In her fear she was capable of no other decision than to hurry to Münsterburg at once; since a train was not expected for several hours, and because she also was afraid of the people who would be riding along and of the employees, as well as those who would be standing around on the station platform, she determined to get ready quickly and to make the three hour journey on foot. As it turned out later, her suspicions and fears were well-grounded. Julian, to be sure, did not sit in prison as did Isidor but with the first news of what had happened in Lautenspiel he had fled the country. The agitation that had sprung up among the people in Isidor's district, among those to whom harm had come or who had felt themselves threatened, already found a strong echo in the district of Lindenberg.

Thus it came about that the Salanders on the same night again sheltered both daughters under their roof. With their entrance Netti awakened from her half-sleep and sadly limped towards them, for her feet had become sore from walking. Her father and mother kissed and embraced her, although the daughters

who were standing face to face with downcast eyes only shook hands, which they did not release however. The burden of fate which had lain upon them ever since they first had pulled on the twins' little earlobes had suddenly doubled, and they were again ashamed of themselves in front of each other.

The one from Lindenberg now had to tell why she had come, so she related her story.

'He has absconded,' the father said. 'It's hardly possible that he's here in the city. But they've done a thorough job, these young fatheads!'

The mother advised them to break off the deliberations for that day and to try to get some rest, for who could tell what the coming days would bring.

'The first thing tomorrow,' said Salander, 'Netti must go back to Lindenberg once more and put the house as well as the office under the protection of the authorities; I'll go along and see to it that it happens properly—things can not be abandoned that way!'

Early in the morning he journeyed over with Netti; when he arrived up there and had looked around, thoroughly annoyed again he wondered how one could become possessed of the devil in that peaceful heavenly light and could shatter so shamefully both world and life for himself.

But inside the house there were, once more, new reports, and it was fortunate that Netti had appeared and that she had been accompanied by her father. In the office a troop of investigators, viceroys, one from the courts and a consulting notary were carrying on; it was already established that the wife of the clerk who had disappeared had secretly left their house—no one knew where she had gone. Netti came just in time to undergo a regular hearing, whereupon she was asked to point out her property which was in the house and she was allowed to take along the absolute necessities and to leave honourably. That she did after, with the assistance of her father, she had paid off the servant and had sent her away and also had left the problem of the whereabouts of the little clerk to the magistrates.

That same day Martin Salander brought this daughter with her few trunks and boxes to safety. However, the prophecy of the two sisters that the good youngsters would soon grow into upright men who would cause people to talk about them was strangely fulfilled.

CHAPTER 17

EACH DAY NOW the newspapers contained reports of the progress of the investigations, the results of which did not resemble each other as much as the Weidelich brothers once did. Because of that each acquired a certain individuality from the other, which never would have been thought possible.

Isidor's sphere of activity included a number of rural communities which at this time were engaged in the improvement of their credit ratings. They formed associations for the mutual guarantee of their mortgaged securities and the like; then they called in the most troublesome and the worst mortgages offering the debtors new titles at a lower rate of interest. Since many financiers at this same time considered their money which they had invested in corporations as no longer safe they gladly grasped again at real estate. But the notary was the middle man and the leader of the entire movement. He wrote out one loan after another, received the payments, redeemed the papers called in by paying off the old creditors and busily issued and recorded new mortgages to the new creditors. Through the hands of the notary passed various monies, and since all this amounted to millions, he proceeded, perhaps modestly, by speculating with only a few hundred thousand in order to try his luck on the stock exchange. Since, like a dumb-bell who rushed into everything without thinking, he only lost and rightly so; he soon saw himself forced to replace one embezzled amount with another, and he continued in that manner briskly issuing promissory notes with more and more zeal. At first with some discrimination he retained the money paid him, but later he squandered all of it without any selectivity. It was a complicated and time-absorbing chore anyway, and so he was able to delay the people for some time with all kinds of pithy figures of speech; also, in cases of special urgency, he would pay something to forestall them, always in the hope that luck would at last strike magnanimously and put everything in order. He even was so bold as to pawn, without making

any entry to that effect, old redeemed titles with foreign banks instead of handing them over to the debtors; these titles, however, had been copied into the official records. In this way more than once he gained double the sum for the same paper.

Accordingly, for a long time he carried on a rather careful secret book-keeping until, like the entire swindle, it became too much for him and he became lost in it.

Julian's procedure was not so painstaking and bold. He contented himself with manufacturing a duplicate and triplicate of every paper which he had to issue for each transaction; the triplicate he made with his own hand in the quiet of the night and kept these artifices in a special treasure chest. Now as soon as he needed ill-gotten gains he picked out one or more pieces and first noted the name of the owner to find out if the originals were in safe hands. If there was a shortage of such pieces then he manufactured and painted, very formally, mortgages completely of his own invention which did not occur in any records, and he saw to it that they concerned persons who lived securely and did not have carryings-on in the money market. He mortgaged the farms of well-to-do farmers, burdening them with debts in favour of persons living far away who themselves were individuals of private means and who did not even dream of their invisible enrichment. To be sure, since these mortgages which hung in thin air looked very solid, bank officials considered them to be safe and lent money on them at the mere sight of the names; so Julian limited himself exclusively, at the end, to this convenient branch and adorned it with numerous fruits. According to need he plucked the latter in order to cover, on the last day of the month, considerable stock market losses.

He also kept a set of books for this part-time job, if only not to miss the interest rate in the bank which was not advisable but also in order to maintain a well-ordered sequence in the paying-back of the borrowed monies. It was the only share in human idealism that was left to the two brothers, to practise wrong only with the reservation of righting it at the proper moment with the help of the Goddess Fortuna and, by all means, not to perish. That supported their easy-going courage even after the fall and gave them the consciousness of not belonging to the entourage of contemptible sinners.

Approximately a week after his flight Frau Netti received a

letter from Julian which he had mailed somewhere on the way to a Portuguese seaport, writing the address in a disguised hand.

'My dearly beloved, most adored wife. A bitter fate has torn me from your side (you already will have learned the details) and has forced me to leave behind that small, cheap country where I was born and where in youthful ignorance I fell victim to the common corruption. A fugitive and outlaw I now hasten to better climes where the free spirit of man finds room for complete development and where I hope, after a short time, to make good the error forced upon me by a Philistine and money-crazy jobber's world. I can affirm under oath, my most precious wife, that this error consisted of a lengthy martyrdom; it was a struggle for existence to which I temporarily have succumbed. I say solemnly, temporarily! And now, dearest wife, as I at one time had sworn eternal fidelity to you, even in the event your parents were to disinherit you, now I rely upon your faith and hope you will preserve it for me after I have become disinherited by our fatherland. Of the lands which I, until now, have travelled through with the speed of a storm I cannot impart anything of interest to you since I, understandably, was unable to make great observations. But I hope to depict minutely from over the ocean the new world which will open up to me as soon as I have touched it with firm and sure feet. Until then I cannot give you any address. Give my most sincere greetings to your honoured and esteemed parents and be so good as to do the same to mine and beg their pardon for me. It is impossible for me to write to them now. Send also a thousand greetings to my dear sister-in-law, Setti. I pity only my poor brother whom they have caught. I think that I have divined the bad example which he had given to me unknowingly. Mark my words, the sun will rise again for us. And now farewell, beloved, until we meet again in happier times when I have prepared an abode for you.

Your loyal husband,

J.W.'

When they were all together at their evening tea Netti gave them the letter to read. It almost cheered them, especially since they saw the deserted wife so serene. This was because without hope of a possible change in her husband she now had closed the account once and for all. Frau Marie felt almost contented; Setti,

on the other hand, was always depressed because her source of difficulty sat very close-by, out of danger—even though unwillingly.

Mr. Möni Wighart came later to have a cup of tea with that good rum in it which Salander knew how to obtain. The latter, who recently did not go about among the people, was delighted that his sympathetic and always unassuming companion occasionally called on him for an hour.

Frau Marie had forgiven him a long time ago for the monstrous crime which he had at one time committed against her when he had enticed away, so to speak, her long-awaited Martin from her house door and into an inn at the time of the latter's first return from Brazil.

She immediately brought him an ashtray.

When Martin Salander filled his cup to the brim, Mr. Wighart cried hypocritically: 'Ho, ho! I'm to be taken for a toper; well, we'll forget about it this once!

'The reason I came so late is rather amusing; I'll have to tell you why. It will give you a little diversion. Master Julian, that ex-notary—excuse me, Frau Netti—appears, subsequently, to be a first-rate humorist.'

'A humorist?' sighed Netti, 'Oh, God!'

'Just listen! I came out of the Four Winds where several gentlemen were sitting who were concerned all day with the matter in question. Shortly before his departure he had deposited with the General Emergency and Aid Bank a beautiful new first mortgage bond in the amount of ten thousand francs and on it received six thousand. Appearing as the debtor in the instrument was a rich, stingy farmer in back of Lindenberg named Agidi whose buildings and land were the security; as creditor was the brother of the debtor, another old skinflint, the so-called "grinder,"* a well-known usurer. These two brothers are carrying on a hereditary war against each other and whenever they are through they begin all over again. Like dog and cat they live opposite each other, and, quite needlessly since each would have enough for himself, they consider each other as the bane of their existence. Well, the old men were called in today, together with

* *Schleifer*: literally, a grinder. In Swiss-German a rascal, a naughty fellow; probably coming from the knife grinder who was usually something of a vagabond.

many others. As their turn in line came someone showed them the beautiful mortgage and asked if it was in order. First the alleged debtor took it into his hands because he was the first to put on his spectacles. By the way, both are hard of hearing and at first didn't understand a single word. Scarcely had the possessor of the farm figured out that he was supposed to be in debt ten thousand francs to his enemy brother than he got into a fearful excitement, and, trembling in wrath, tore the letter from top to bottom so that the two pieces looked like two saws.'

'But the "grinder," who believed nothing else but that his brother was destroying a document belonging to him and useful to him, threw himself upon the other and instantaneously their hands grasped each other's neckerchief, and with short, powerless fisticuffs the oldsters hammered on each other's heads. They were separated with great effort, and as soon as they stood still, breathless, the facts were shouted into their ears. However, as soon as they learned that someone had received six thousand francs in hard cash on the basis of this paper which now lay joined in a make-shift manner on the table, they again jumped at each other's chins and cheeks and they very quickly tore at each other's nostrils. They were tamed once more amidst great laughter which at last had overcome the official solemnity. Two men seized the would-be creditor by the shoulders, pressed his face to the paper and asked him to answer, yes or no, whether he himself had given these ten thousand francs to the notary at Lindenberg for the peasant, Agidi, who now stood next to him, or whether he had delivered the sum via someone else and had, in return, received this very letter, and had he at any time possessed it?

'After anxious deliberation and while his blood dripped onto that unfortunate mortgage, he cawed at last: "No, I know nothing of it; let me go!"

'"But I want to know who got the six thousand francs on my farm," screamed the other to whom the connection still did not seem clear. However, they were led without any information out of the door where the rest of the witnesses waited. They got their hats and canes and were sent away. Scarcely had they reached the street before their accursed passion made use of the long missed opportunity and it goaded the befooled skinflints against each other once more. Without knowing where, and without

being able to let go of each other, they were thus fettered by hatred. They ran along on opposite sides of the street, scolding and threatening horribly; by George, it was a repulsive example of the lengths to which miserable avarice and envy can drive even a pair of aged brothers. I had just arrived and ran after the raving brothers until they suddenly took hold of each other again and, without hitting each other, threshed around with their long hawthorn canes. Then a city policeman came and led the poor devils to headquarters. Afterward I went to the Four Winds where I learned the other events, as I have related.

‘Isn’t it a cunning prank of that notary, even a delightful notion, to entangle the hair of the money-mad old brothers by means of a mortgage making them creditor and debtor? Of course they didn’t have much hair left and the skimpy strands which were still hanging around have been torn out completely.’

‘That was no comical idea,’ said Netti, ‘I recall now that he once complained, when he had looked for money for his clients from the rich misers, of being roughly refused by both of them. Now he just made use of them anyway—without asking them!’

‘Naturally, already at that time he had wanted to cheat them. Now the General Emergency and Aid Bank must carry the loss,’ replied Salander. ‘Nevertheless, it is, indeed, a sad, ridiculous phenomenon.’

‘Yes indeed!’ Frau Marie replied, ‘as one says when seeing a raging inferno at night, it’s frightfully beautiful! Heaven protect us!’

They continued speaking in this manner; half-past nine had already gone by when someone pulled hard on the housebell. After a little while Magdalene came in with a letter which a prison messenger had brought. At the request of the imprisoned Weidelich the warden had given it to him in the afternoon, but because he had been busy working he had not been sent home until now and thus brought the letter at this late hour.

The writing was truly in Isidor’s hand and was addressed to his wife, Setti, who was startled by the letter.

‘Is that man gone?’ asked Salander. When the servant answered in the affirmative he said that since they already had Julian’s letter they should accept Isidor’s, and that Setti should read it silently before offering it to the others. One had to be-

gin to approach things now from the side of the unusual otherwise they would be overcome only with difficulty.

'That sample letter which Netti received was enough for me,' Setti said, 'and I do not doubt that my epistle is of equal worth. I don't wish to read it and I'll give it to you! Read it—I'm going to bed!'

With that she arose and wanted to leave but her father restrained her.

'Stop!' he said, 'you also must listen and Mr. Wighart should hear too; thus it becomes something which, to a certain degree, concerns everyone—some perhaps, purely casually, some in an objectively neutral manner. Mother may read it aloud, in that way she can stop immediately as soon as she feels that something embarrassing might come to the fore.'

'Oh, you arch hair-splitter!'; Marie Salander smiled as she spoke, 'give me the letter.' Although her husband had for some years already required glasses whenever he wanted to read, she read the scribbling with her naked eye, without even requiring that the lamp be brought closer.

'Dearly beloved creature; most precious wife! At last I find a moment of composure in order to send you a sign of life from my imprisonment. I will not, at this time, enlarge upon the suffering up to now, and how it has come about. If it is God's will the day of our reunion will not fail to appear when, in happy retrospect, we'll be able to reflect sufficiently, in happy small talk, upon the misfortune. May it be so! For the present I'd like to bother you with several little desires whose fulfilment, in these temporary circumstances, would be useful to me. Since the rage of the interrogations seems to have eased somewhat, so much free time is given to me that the inactivity becomes painful for me. I received the idea of taking account of myself, in addition, perhaps, of being useful to the community by writing from the standpoint of a self-examiner a social-pedagogical study about dereliction of duty and its well-springs in the life of the state and nation and about the clogging-up of these sources. Unfortunately I'm lacking the good writing material to which I have been accustomed; what I get here is miserable. So send me a ream of white, heavy but well-glazed paper, Imperial; in addition, send a box of my steel pens which you, of course, are familiar with,

a small bottle of blue ink, ditto of red and two pen-holders. You'll best get all this from J. G. Schwarz and Co. Concerning the food, I'm not faring as badly since my parents have guaranteed my support, for you know that I was dragged away without a centime. A little improvement from the list mentioned below would be very desirable. Finally, suitable reading matter is lacking. Of course there are books to be had but they are more suitable for children or for inmates of reformatories. A good geography or history book on North and South American countries would be extremely welcome, in addition to several volumes of Gerstäcker* or something of that nature. I also miss my dressing gown which I had forgotten. With the aid of the bailiff you could perhaps spirit it away from our idyll. It's probably still hanging behind the door as always. Do me the favour and take heed of the following list of my current wishes:

1. the afore-mentioned writing material
2. the dressing gown
3. 1 medium-size wheel of Edam cheese
4. Salami sausage; one half of a large one and a whole small one
5. a jar of plum preserves
6. 1 bottle of cognac
7. books of the above-mentioned kind
8. a few dozen cigars to try out, medium strong
9. my hair brushes which I had forgotten—perhaps they can be had with the robe
10. one or two neckties

Constantly your faithful

Isidor.'

'P.S. I believe that it was proper for me to explain my resignation from the Cantonal Council at this time. Nevertheless, I feel the need to remain posted as well as possible; perhaps my respected father-in-law would be so good as to have the most important bills and reports sent to me occasionally.'

'Thanks for the confidence!' Salander murmured. 'Is that the end, Marie?'

* Friedrich Gerstäcker, a writer who under the influence of James Fenimore Cooper produced novels such as *Die Flusspiraten des Mississippi* (*The River Pirates of the Mississippi*), etc.

'Yes, thank God!' she replied, putting down the letter. 'How do you like the epistle, Setti? Do you intend to go out and buy the things he demands?'

With the tip of her nose visibly pale the letter writer's wife said:

'I'm freezing because of a chill which has suddenly fallen upon me; I want to go to bed. Goodnight, everybody.'

'Well, friend Möni?' Martin said after that daughter had left, 'is he a humorist too?'

Wighart had already put away his cigar holder. 'No, that ceases to be funny,' said he, bewildered, 'the jar of plum preserves has knocked me down!'

'The Edam cheese and the paper for the study are not bad either, or the council reports,' sighed Salander. 'No trace of shame or remorse; nothing but hot air! It seems to me that he's sitting on a hollow spot on the earth's crust.'

'It's not quite so precarious,' admonished the mother, 'if heads are hollow then the earth can still endure for a little while. Tomorrow I want to look in on the parents at the Finch again and see how they are. Perhaps it would be more suitable to put in a good word or extend a little consolation there.'

'Well said,' replied Möni Wighart. 'Yesterday I was again at the justice of the peace over at the Red Man—he has a splendid new wine. Of course he's white haired but he's still lively. I heard that Mrs. Weidelich, when the flight of her other son had become known, became bed-ridden and old Weidelich goes around like a shadow on the wall. But he stays at his work constantly, gets up an hour earlier and goes to bed later, keeping busy in all possible ways and always silent as if he wanted to banish or undo the misfortune. And, in addition, he is even looking after his wife. Now I don't want to be a burden to you people any longer; keep your chins up. Have a good rest. What does it say in the letter? I just can't remember; let's see.'

He picked up the letter which was still lying open and read it.

'Exactly, there it is. "Salami sausage; one half of a large one and a whole small one." It sounds rather droll! A very good night again!'

CHAPTER 18

AFTER DINNER the next day Marie Salander went up to the Finch, taking the old route as she had that time Arnold was waiting for her. She encountered old Weidelich in his vegetable garden where he was looking after the harvesting of his crop; shovel in hand he was clearing away the withered leaves and other residue from his crop, giving orders to two or three workers. In that short time he seemed to have become about ten years older.

As Mrs. Salander approached slowly among the beds he put his shovel into the ground and, taking off his old cap, went to meet her.

'Don't let me disturb you! I only wanted to see how things are and how your wife is getting along. We had heard that she is ill.'

'That's very kind of you,' said Jacob Weidelich, 'unfortunately, my wife is in bed and is doing poorly. She had a stroke when she heard that Julian had fled and had slipped to the same level as the other one. Won't you go in for a moment? I scarcely dare address you any longer as a kinswoman.'

'But is she able to talk?'

'Only slowly; she's half paralysed. I don't know how it will end.'

'The poor woman, I'll go in and greet her if that will do.'

The sorrowing man led her into the house and into one of the adjoining rooms where the mother of the ruined sons lay in bed.

'Amalie, this is Mrs. Salander, she's so kind and wants to visit you.'

Deep in the blue and white checkered bedding the patient rested; Jacob arranged the pillows under her head so that she could look around more easily. Marie sat down on the chair which was standing next to the bed. She seized the one hand capable of movement and received a weak squeeze in response. With comforting words she inquired regarding the condition of

the sorely-tried woman. Mrs. Weidelich turned her eyes towards her and stared.

She said nothing except: 'Both lost!' That came easily.

Then she became silent, breathing heavily until she had gathered a few additional words: 'I can't keep thoughts together because the boys are so far apart. One here, I don't know where; the other on the ocean. Oh, I won't see either one any more—never!'

'We shouldn't say that, everything will pass over and will again become pleasant,' Mrs. Salander replied against her convictions, trying to console her. She was not able to do differently because she felt and understood the sorrows of the helpless mother, or rather it hurt her that her good intentions did not have better words at their disposal.

But the patient moved, as best she could, shaking her head in a negative answer.

'No, I think I've heard that they're wizards and don't want to come back because it's not quite honourable—such rascally blondies. Oh, Lord Jesus, they were so dear—no, still are. . . .'

Her head sank to one side and she closed her eyes.

'She's only exhausted and wants to sleep now,' said Jacob Weidelich when he saw that Mrs. Salander was frightened. The latter noiselessly arose and went out with him. In the larger room the man, who was himself tired, brought her another chair; she noticed that he still wished to speak so she sat down next to him on the old bench.

To her question whether he already was strongly involved in the misfortune, aside from the illness of the woman, he replied that everything he had acquired was, for the most part, lost. As the one who had furnished the bond he already had had to guarantee the money for both sons. As soon as the lawsuit or lawsuits were at a certain stage then the claims would be due. Of course, he had co-signers but they would have to pay only what he could not afford. Besides, they were relatives whose remonstrances and disrespect he would not tolerate.

'I'll not be driven from the farm but it will be burdened with debts and I'll have to work the few years that are left to me in order to pay the interest on it if I want to keep it—if I really survive these times at all. I'll certainly lose my wife and with her a nice income. The most difficult, however, is that I don't know how

I should again help the boys to their feet when they have paid for their crimes. Whether I live or not there won't be anything left and, after all, they are one's own children!'

'You shouldn't take it so hard,' Marie Salander said; 'they're still young enough for honourable work, and if life is difficult it won't hurt them. Each of them has written to his wife; both letters accidentally arrived on the same day. I'd rather not show them to you, good Mr. Weidelich, for there's nothing to be learned from either letter other than that each of them lacks any feeling and understanding of their true situation. I wouldn't tell it to their father if I didn't think it would help you a little to see things correctly.'

The poor man's face grew more lean, if such were possible; with a quick fluttering of his eyelids and looking to one side he replied:

'It will be that way; I begin to understand.'

He remained sorrowful, withdrawn, like a being who tries to take leave of a necessary word or idea which is essential to him.

'At the beginning of this story we have, my wife and I,' he continued, 'deliberated and pondered deeply where they could have inherited their evil ways. We're both plain people and neither of us knows anything of our families further back than our grandparents and their times; what is beyond that we know as little of as of the pagans from whom all of us have descended. But, nevertheless, if something had taken place or someone had been punished in the time of my great-grandfather, for example, then my father would have known of it and spoken of it for he often mentioned his grandparents. And the same is true of my wife. Only of one of her grandfather's brothers has she a faint remembrance, that he is supposed to have stolen a little keg of apple cider and, to be sure, it was done out of charity because a miserable coachman had left it lying out in the hot sun while he sat inside in the shade of an inn. That's why he was put in the dungeon, you see; he was her great-uncle.'

'That doesn't count,' Frau Marie said smilingly, although the man by no means had intended to tell a joke. She stood up in order to leave. Father Jacob hesitated a little and then timidly announced that he had still more which was pressing upon his heart. After her request to tell her about it, he continued.

'I believe that the marriage between our children is at an end.

My wife did not want to hear anything about it when, before the flight of the second one, she was still able and willing to speak. But I only can and must approve of it if the young women sue for divorce. I don't know how it could be otherwise, especially after what I've heard of the letters which my sons have written. I would be doubly oppressed in my troubles if I would have to see how, in the future, my blood would be a burden to a fine family and bring dishonour to them. No, Mrs. Salander, don't believe that I take the step the wrong way and that I don't think it to be wholly justified. I had to tell you that, and I also beg of you not to bear a grudge against me and my wife because of all the unpleasant things which have come to you and of those which you still are to experience because of us.'

Marie Salander gave him her hand.

'Of course, everything will be as you have said. Our daughters will have to separate from those hapless men; they have had to endure more than you know of and they were silent about it. But they do not have any intention of burdening themselves for the rest of their lives with that which is yet to come, and we would not allow that. But, speaking for my family, I want to thank you for your honourable sentiment and assure you that we, knowing very well how our daughters have erred, will keep a friendly memory of you and your fine wife, and we shall certainly be ready to be helpful whenever the occasion arises. Today I was able to look deeply into Life—at the bed in there and in this room. Farewell, and may God help you!'

Once more, with her eyes wet, she offered her hand which Jacob's shaking hand pressed. But he was not able to reply since his unaccustomed eloquence, his gift of tongue, had suddenly left him.

Pensively, Mrs. Salander went down the hill; she reflected upon how differently, in spite of all the sadness, the lot was divided between the two families since the daughters bore the greater guilt in that thoughtless marriage in respect to their more mature years at the time of their marriage. And who could say if the motive to get rich could not have entered the minds of those foolish notaries just through this so-called wealthy match. Then she remembered the gloomy search of the old people and the little keg of apple cider which had been pilfered by an ancestor.

That would be the last straw, she thought, if those poor people should have to brood over where they've inherited these evils, whether from the father's or from the mother's side. I won't tell my Martin anything about it otherwise he'd likewise probe into it, adding to his educational ideas another one about instructing people in the theory of selectivity in regard to morals, or however he would call it. And the touching search of the hopeless parents would, in time, be inflated into Lord knows what kind of work for a homunculus.

Marie Salander did not think that out scientifically, but she would not trouble herself about it and so kept silent regarding the little keg of cider.

Two days after the arrival of Julian's letter a press report brought the news of his arrest in Lisbon where, well-supplied with money, he was strolling around on the streets.

After eight more days he was brought in, in the roughest manner, in thumbscrews, since he had tried to escape. His lawsuit soon kept pace with that of Isidor's for the latter's called for a more complicated and time-consuming procedure than did the amusing and simple larceny of Julian.

Finally, the indictments were written, and since the brothers no longer denied any of the crimes they were guilty of the two cases could have been judged by the criminal court of justice* if a remnant of frauds had not been left to each of them, which the two defendants would not confess to and which still could not be explained otherwise. Only in the last hour was a subordinate traced whom the two Weidelichs had used in many ways, without the other being aware of it and without believing that the man had an inkling of the shady nature of the services being entrusted to him. The latter saw through the affair, however, because of the strange behaviour of the brothers and because of the great frequency of their errands, or he was impudent enough, at least, to pretend to see through them and so committed a series of moderate additions or subtractions, according to need, by payments or withdrawals to the benefit of his own pocket. This subordinate, this delinquent parasite, was subsequently arrested, tried and confronted along with the brothers and as good as con-

* *Strafsenat*: the present-day *Kriminalgericht* consisting of professional judges only (there being no jury). As soon as the accused denies the accusation he is tried before a jury.

victed. However, he denied everything and anything, and so all three trials had to be brought before a jury to be tried simultaneously.

With that the unfortunate boys and their families were not spared the worst, a public spectacle, for on the appointed day in and before the courthouse and in the surrounding inns a great crowd had gathered. And in the midst of this restless surging they sat in the defendant's dock as on an island in the sea. This time they could not, as they had done in the Cantonal Council, go to a table and write letters, and instead of the servile bailiff, a policeman stood behind each one of them.

On another island sat a little group of jurymen, simple men blown here by the lottery from every corner of the land along with their foreman whom they had appointed hurriedly and in whom, perhaps, by virtue of his position in civil life, they had the greatest confidence and of whom they expected the greatest skill.

The tribunal occupied an elevated stand. The number of the witnesses summoned was so great that only in little groups were they led in, and each time were viewed shyly, out of the corners of their eyes, by the defendants. All were well-known to them, country people whose material existence they would have destroyed if the state with its power had not interfered. A troop of financiers also appeared, coming to claim a goodly portion of the total damage which exceeded a half million.

The trials which consisted more in the elaborate reading of the bills of indictment and the determination of all individual points than in long speeches by the public prosecutors and defence attorneys lasted until towards evening; nothing more was contested save the parts clouded by the delinquent parasite. These incidental matters took care of themselves, however, and even served as a proof by which the whole large sum tallied, so to speak, to the last franc. Isidor's attorney even used the occasion to spotlight the brothers Weidelich as a species of orderly men who were brought to the rim of perdition only by a fraudulent confidant. In return, a prosecutor asked whether the attorney would not demand a citizen's crown for the defendants. It was well that the state would not have to clean up the whole mess alone, otherwise one would live to see the colossal blood-letting designated as a social-political action study, a somewhat far-

reaching practical attempt, to be sure, which had to be treated with the respect and leniency due to the victims of the social problems.

Julian's attorney immediately seized this ironical thrust in complete earnest and elaborated on it further, searching for extenuating circumstances or even reasons for justification. He started his harangues on the deplorable insufficiency of public instruction, of people's education which is to be blamed for all that misfortune. In the present case the promising men were, of course, sent to school and even to institutions of higher learning. He did not want to probe into the nature of these schools more closely, it sufficed in the evidence that the effect was lacking. And then he found no other way out than to digress to their parents who, neglected by the state in their own education, had not found the means to give the right emphasis to their goodwill and, by pointing to their own experiences, to protect their sons from going astray, etc.

The prodigal sons looked at the speaker as though they began to see their way in the light of a star of hope. The presiding judge, however, closed the proceedings and made the summarising speech to the jury, explaining, by means of patient viewpoints, the series of questions which they would have to answer. In conclusion, he could not refrain from rejecting as the source of the crimes the attacks upon the educational system by the perverted attorneys.

'Gentlemen of the jury,' he said in a serious voice, 'it is now a hundred years since a good man* in our land wrote a book for the poor and ignorant with which you are all familiar; it is called *Lienhard and Gertrud*. From then on he spent a long life full of toil, misunderstandings and tireless work, through which the structure of our public schools was prepared and upon which it has been founded. For more than half a century our local community has walked reverently in the footsteps of that good man, has continuously renewed the edifice and, uninterruptedly, has improved upon it. Many millions have we sacrificed for it in these fifty years; for decades we prided ourselves that expenses for our educational institutions formed the highest expense in the budget of the state. At present this amounts to almost one half of the yearly budget, although we do not improperly neglect, as

* Pestalozzi.

I believe, the rest of the obligations of the state! The burden which the individual communities impose upon themselves for their schools naturally is not included. And new demands are being made daily for the purpose of the education of the people, and, if at all possible, all of them are being examined and considered—if they are not completely unreasonable. And now we are faced with such a statement!

'Gentlemen of the jury, the honest parents of those two defendants also were pupils of the new times, as probably most of the old people among us, but even if that were not the case we still would have no right to make them responsible for the sins of their children because of their alleged ignorance, just as we cannot do so with the institutions of those times. For I believe the house of the unlearned peasant can at all times, even today, be a school of honesty and of loyalty to duty! As to the utterances of the defence attorneys, gentlemen, I express my conviction that you in your considerations give them the less thought, as they do not, in the legal sense, belong to the matter. I think that you know that but, nevertheless, I had to say it in my capacity because I have already felt, as frequently I have of late, as though the ghost of a hysterical old female were dashing around our country like the devil in the Book of Job.'

It is true that this judge was the same man who was chairman in the Cantonal Council at the time of the first appearance of the twins, and he was an Old Liberal. For that reason a vehement hissing was hurled in opposition to some unseemly shouts of acclamation which were heard coming from the crowd.

The jury withdrew. Although they were as good as agreed upon the findings to be rendered, nevertheless they needed to give some time to the proper procedure of the business, and the greater part of the people who were informed of that withdrew.

At the Finch it was still more quiet this day than usual. Jacob Weidelich tried to hide himself, once in the stable then again in the remotest corners of his gardens or of his storerooms, in the work which he did not find tiring. Now and then he looked after his wife who had recovered so far as to be able to leave the bed at times and to rest in a wheelchair. With effort the man had concealed from her all news of the proceedings of that sad affair. She neither knew anything of the arrest of the

escaped Julian nor of today's trial, and it appeared as if a happy forgetfulness of things would help her strong nature.

In the afternoon it became quieter and quieter. Not only had the entire neighbourhood been driven into town by curiosity, but Weidelich's helpers also had run away from their work in order to see the sons of their master sitting in their distressed state. Already the early autumn dusk had fallen, and it continued to be quiet except for the cows in the stable who were lowing for water. Weidelich went to drive them to the water trough. It was no longer the old one with the rifle barrel; that one had no longer sufficed for the enlarged farm. Therefore additional water rights had been purchased, and a stone fountain with two strong metal pipes had been erected. The spotted animals crowded around the spacious trough and drank deeply of the clear mountain water. Jacob did not begrudge it to them, and with that melancholy absent-mindedness which for a moment stops the passing of the most bitter hour saw the cool liquid flow. The stately fountain was supposed to be the forerunner of a new home, now it remained a symbol of the unaccomplished.

When the cows had drunk their fill he led them back to their stall. The youngest jumped about and ran away into a meadow. Jacob looked for the dairymaid who was standing hidden behind the barn door, gossiping softly with one of the girls.

In the meantime, since she did not hear or see anyone, it had become monotonous for the sick woman in the house. She dragged herself out of the sitting-room where her wheelchair stood towards the half-opened window in the bedroom in order to look for her husband. Just under this window lay one of the farm boys who had returned finally and had slipped unnoticed behind the house to busy himself. Conversing with him was the neighbour's maid.

They thought that the mistress was in the front room, and while they did not speak up loudly, yet it was so distinct that the patient heard everything, and, with proper insight, in one moment grasped what they were talking about; it was as if all the time in the past she had been told every single thing. Claspings the window frames with both of her shaking hands she listened with her better ear.

'It was a devilish crowd,' the boy said, 'head after head and yet deathly quiet as the sentence was being pronounced.'

‘What was the sentence?’ the girl asked impatiently.

‘Each one received twelve years forced labour, the one from Lindenberg as well as the one from Unterlaub. There was still a smaller rascal there, a sort of porter for the other one, he received four years. I’m sorry for the old folks, I can’t help it!’

‘Lord and Saviour!’ said the girl. ‘Twelve years! How did they look? What did they do?’

‘I wasn’t able to see them. Someone who stood in front of me said they looked miserable; he thought that they were fainting. But I didn’t believe it. The people laughed and swore all the time.’

Jacob Weidelich came around the corner of the house and, without making any inquiries, sent the boy as well as the girl about their business. He took care of some things in the barn, and since it had become completely dark he finally went into the house to make a light and to take care of his wife. Not until now did his tired heart oppress him, because he knew what must have happened today and that it could not remain hidden from his poor wife much longer.

He did not find her in her wheelchair; the pillows had fallen to the floor. Frightened, he went into the other room where she lay on the floor at the window, the death rattle sounding feebly.

‘Oh wife! What are you doing, poor child?’ he sobbed and carried her to the bed. He shone the lamp in her face. Laboriously her eyes turned towards his for the last time and then were extinguished.

The doctor whom Jacob had sent for immediately via the talkative boy and who was there within ten minutes confirmed her demise.

At this hour the sons of the dead woman resembled each other as much as they had when they were younger, and they caused a dilemma among the officials of the penitentiary after they were shorn, shaved and put into their convict’s uniforms, living proof that the iron clockwork of justice still was wound and doing its duty.

After the expiration of three days Jacob Weidelich had the body buried. As always, he had spent the nights in his bed which stood near hers; the long sleepless hours, by this means, passed by more tolerably because he imagined that she must

hear his grief and the few words directed towards her which he occasionally groaned.

On that last morning, standing in front of the little mirror which had served him for so many years, with an uncertain hand he removed his stubble-like beard. His sunken cheeks, his altered chin and especially the shaving of the little whiskers were to him the greatest of labour, making his miserable life appear no longer worth while.

One moment it seemed to him as if he could do no better than to drive deeply with his razor and to cut his throat, for then he too would be set free. But the feeling of duty which was rooted within him did not permit him to delay in these thoughts a second moment; more calmly he finished shaving. Only a small portion of the few relatives appeared as mourners, the others had excused themselves. Martin Salander, whom the widower had informed but had not expressly invited, appeared in the house dressed in black among the little group of otherwise plainly dressed men of Jacob's acquaintance who did not refuse him this good turn. It obviously was of comfort to that poor man in the painful silence which reigned in that room of sadness. In front of the house, on the other hand, a goodly number of serious people from the neighbourhood had gathered, and they followed the coffin draped in black which was being carried out to the graveyard.

It was a blustery day in late autumn. Now the sun shone on the meadows and gardens; and now the wind chased flying clouds across the sky and their shadows over the path on which the funeral procession moved slowly, led by the coffin carried by eight men. Over the bier and heads of the mourners the wind drove the dead foliage which had been torn from the trees; the yellow leaves rustled and danced so quickly along the way ahead of them it was as if they were alive and were in a great hurry to announce the going home of a soul.

At the graveyard the sun paused and glittered in undisputed splendour upon the hundreds of glass, tinsel and metal wreaths which were hung tastelessly upon the headstones of the dead, the result of the same vanity which had filled the newspapers for weeks—first with the announcement of the death and then with the announcements of thanks for the praiseworthy sympathy which had been extended. In her good times all that would have

been truly to the liking of poor Amalie Weidelich. Now she was removed from this foolishness and went on her last journey in a better and higher style.

While the bier continued on its journey towards the open grave the funeral procession entered the prayer house, where the preacher was ready to deliver the prescribed address and prayer. He had visited Father Weidelich and had seen that he would not be able to stand a righteous funeral sermon, fitted to the circumstances according to rural custom, and therefore he resisted the temptation to deliver a parable.

After he had completed his duties he held his cap before his face and remained in his place as a sign that the service was over. One after another began to go out. Weidelich, out of modesty and because he was worn out, remained seated on a bench until the chapel was empty and the spiritual leader had unexpectedly disappeared also. Then he too tottered out and from the doorway looked towards the grave. Of the persons in the retinue there was no one to be seen.

Then Martin Salander approached, took him under the arm and led him to the grave where the gravedigger had just lowered the simple coffin of white pine (as was being built in these new times for rich and poor alike) and had begun to shovel down the earth.

Defenceless, Jacob Weidelich began to cry and the words: 'Oh you poor child!' were scarcely utterable this second time since he had found his wife dead. Because no more tender one was at the command of the withering man he spoke to her in the forgotten voice of youth, which again had awakened.

After the earth had been piled over the coffin and the gravedigger was still stroking and pounding his work with the flat of his shovel, giving the appearance that he was an artist, Salander led the lonely man away and accompanied him as far as the house, because he knew that now he was alone—if one did not count the servants who had become estranged to him.

Silently he sat with him at the table for some time. Weidelich rested and then brooded to himself until he stood up and said:

'From now on my wife may rest in the morning, but at the proper time I must get up on my legs and procure the money for the bond which will now have to be paid. In the evening I'll no longer be sitting on free land, and I will be as poor as one of

my mice and, in addition, duty-bound for my time and labour. It's hard to work without reward!'

Salander pulled out his purse and laid it on the table. 'Because of this affair,' he replied to the other, 'I've become anxious. My family and I, that is, my wife and daughters, said that we could not abandon you in such circumstances, that it behoves us to loosen in a friendly way the band of kinship although it has brought no blessing to anyone. So yesterday I went to the treasury and had your bond obligations fulfilled, as it were, in your name. Here you have the receipts for seventy-six thousand francs, they're for both sons. Now just live and work and stay healthy and don't make any ceremony about the affair—no one will bother you. As far as I'm concerned I can afford it and have nothing against your helping your sons with it sometime. They were at one time the husbands of our daughters, and so I can take over a debt for them if it will make the last days of their honest father lighter. Take the receipts and keep the facts a secret, the people can believe that I've loaned on your farm.'

Jacob Weidelich flushed to the utmost and did not trust his eyes when he held the two receipts in his hand. Confused and inarticulate he expressed his gratitude in which was mixed doubt over the acceptability of such a sacrifice. But he held the receipts tightly, and as Salander was leaving he was able to hear how already Jacob's voice sounded stronger when he admonished one of the workers.

Now that's over said Martin to himself, and the merchant in him added whether or not it was questionable for one rightly to call him a fool since actually he had made only a present to the young, incarcerated criminals who, after all, would inherit from the father, and when they were free again the latter might be dead a long time.

No, no, the old Martin again said. It's right this way and it is the best final settlement which could be made with the boys after they had been able to crowd into my life's circle. Oh yes, that bewitched wedding! Tomorrow the attorney has to be entrusted with the divorce suits for my daughters. This matter will soon be finished.

CHAPTER 19

WHILE MARTIN SALANDER had become appalled, sorrowful and confused by the malady of the times, which in grievous symptoms ultimately crowded up against his own hearthside, he had almost completely lost sight of Louis Wohlwend and his family. Of course that was because after he had taken his boys to a school on Lake Geneva as he had promised, Wohlwend travelled frequently and he indeed did strive to bring about his idea of the Kingdom of God. He visited spiritual and worldly leaders and took part in gatherings of various kinds in order to provide an entrance for his holy cause and to promote it, but with the exception of a few inventors of perpetual motion machines and the like he found little or no sympathy. With great pains he had had a constitution drawn up in which the presidency of all councils, ratifying powers and courts was to be reserved for the dear Lord; for the immediate conduct of business vice-presidents were to be elected by the church synod, which coincided with the Cantonal Council. This synod was supposed to consist of just as many laymen as clergymen. In the case of all worldly and spiritual authorities, especially in the courts, if there were a tie then the important decision was to be given to the Divine President by means of lots drawn under the observance of a special order of prayer, etc. God's final decision appeared the more wonderous as Wohlwend, in answer to questions, declared that it would be all the same to his far-reaching indulgence which belief in God was to be the basic one—whether the personal super-worldly or the all inclusive inner-worldly, the Trinity or the absolutely Unitarian, to him it was only a matter of the ideality of thought.

This adventurousness, however, did not do even as much damage to him as did the complete lack of religious feeling and understanding which he conceived in the word 'religion.' Thus everyone noticed that as soon as he had uttered his word concerning the eternal ideals Wohlwend had reached the bottom of

his schoolbag—and this was smaller than that of a newly-confirmed child. His former teaching method of first asking others what he could advantageously pass on to his pupils now left him completely in the lurch, since he was now old and could only make himself look ridiculous.

In spite of that he did not let matters rest; he acted as if he did not notice anything and with an easy mind continued to utilise every opportunity to unfurl his prophet's cloak—and indication that Salander had speculated correctly and that Wohlwend merely wanted to possess a mannerism, to use it only as a magic cloak and to have a pastime as he had had long ago with heraldry and with the catching of crawfish.

Now that the good weather was past and the first snow had fallen he was at home more often. One morning he found himself alone with Frau Alexandra, engaged in a strange dialogue which he had guided towards a discussion of their private matters. It concerned the relationship with Martin Salander. It had fallen asleep apparently and Wohlwend had thought of reviving it. But, since he had not been invited, he had not yet taken a single step into the house of his old friend, and he was not so bold as to appear without an invitation for he feared the lady of the house there as he feared a sword. But during the past month Salander had felt even less courage and desire to dare the attempt to bring the family into his house.

Only casually occupied with writing, Wohlwend sat at an attractive but poorly constructed little lady's writing table which he had provided for himself. Among the many drawers and pigeon holes, behind a little mirrored door, the draft of his constitution lay in a tabernacle. Turning halfway towards his wife who was sitting on the sofa he replied to something which she had just said:

'Can't you ever understand me? I've not aimed Myrrha at old Mr. Salander! He enjoys seeing her and is perhaps in love with her; of course by this I'll draw him towards us. But he has a son who's returning home and he will be the heir to the important business; he's the one who's to marry Myrrha if someone doesn't spoil my plans. Then not only do I expect to receive useful connections but also hope to repay the extreme haughtiness of Madame Salander who despises us.'

Murmuring to himself he continued:

'The self-righteous and shrewd brother Martin, her spouse—the snob—has in the meantime received through his famous sons-in-law the reward for that wedding.'

Meanwhile his wife had again begun to speak and he cried: 'What are you saying?'

'I said that my sister can't be treated in such a manner. Because of that joke you played on the old man she's already being gossiped about, and when the son is here perhaps he has someone whom he knows, or for some reason he doesn't want Myrrha. Just look at me and sneer! It's so!'

Involuntarily he shook the table upon which his hands were leaning.

But Alexandra spoke only louder.

'She isn't the most sensible person and she doesn't have, as it seems, anyone in the world other than myself who looks after her so that she doesn't. . . .'

At this point she was interrupted by a crash. Louis Wohlwend had risen angrily, leaned on the writing desk and thereby split asunder the thin legs which were supporting it. The fragile piece of furniture lay deplorably on the floor, along with everything that had been on top of it; out of the little porcelain receptacle ran a miserable rivulet of ink.

Also in that same instant Myrrha entered the room, and in fright and in pity stood in front of the damage. Wohlwend suddenly came to his senses, and Frau Alexandra left the corner into which she had fled. The conversation was at an end for now.

The essence of that conversation entered into another dwelling. Salander's sorrows had come to rest, the madness of the common evil had slackened, the annoying newspaper reports gradually ceased and his particular lot, the story of the two notaries, had become numbed in the atoning silence of the prison. His daughters had decided upon the brief divorce proceedings and consolingly had arranged their old-new lives in their parents' home.

With a portion of their possessions they had settled in the upper story of the house and they helped their mother with the domestic activities to which they had become accustomed during their lonely matrimones. However, they lived a secluded and comparatively contented life which, as far as the father could determine, did not prevent the mother from trusting quietly in

her son Arnold, through whom, perhaps, men of ability would appear in the family circle. The daughters, in fact, finally began to develop their personalities—as though they had now matured mentally. Arnold should, for the time being, live in the house where Salander's business offices were. After the proprietor had died he had at last bought that estate. The large garden was to be replanted and to be established anew; the building as well was to be remodelled and enlarged so as to house all of them.

Thus after a peaceful calm had entered and the future seemed brighter and again augured of luck, except for the dark pressure of his rejuvenated desire for love, or however one wishes to call it. Martin Salander's heart also unloaded its burden. In order to resume with renewed power his manifold activities for both the citizens and the state, he whole-heartedly believed that it was necessary for his heart to be stimulated by the beautiful chaste affection which during the storm had cowered like a little owl and now again had spread its wings and let its eyes glow in the dark nights. To be sure, the presence of the daughters still prevented him from taking any uncertain step, so that he indulged in only vague plans and hopes for a meeting.

It happened that one afternoon in winter, around Christmas-time, as he was going to take a walk in the open country, he met Miss Myrrha Glawicz in the suburbs apparently searching for the way home. She was wrapped in velvet, furs and veil, and cautiously and timidly she was placing her lovely feet in the snow exactly like a trim, beautiful little bird from warmer climes.

Not until she was close-by did he recognise the form which his eyes had been following with such pleasure, and he saw how she blushed deeply and looked at him imploringly with her big eyes, as if asking him for sympathy since, joyfully startled, he had greeted her. After learning where it was that she desired to go, he accompanied her a little distance on the right road; he attempted to talk to her, without finding, however, an orderly progress to the conversation. Soon he was just as confused as was the young woman who stopped in front of a house, suddenly thanked him sweetly, took leave of him and went inside after blushing once more.

While he continued on his way for hours until the reddish twilight gradually veiled the snow covered fields, he decided to inform his wife that he wished to introduce the Wohlwend ladies

into the house and, thereby, to confess to her openly how he needed the sight of Myrrha's innocent beauty—how by it he hoped to recover from the maladies of the times and to regain his strength, and how there should not be any misgivings or dangers contained in it. In short, he thought out a long speech in which he presented his folly as wisdom. Even his fine daughters no longer seemed hinderances to him but, on the contrary, as youthful mediators in the process of rejuvenation who, more than ever, made the delightful association possible. In spite of that his heart beat somewhat apprehensively as he neared his house; the fear, however, transformed itself into astonishment because all of the windows in the house, from the bottom to the top, were brightly illuminated.

Trunks and parcels stood in the entrance hall; the beautiful lamp, a newly-purchased item, hung down from above illuminating the stairway where Frau Marie, a bunch of keys in her hand, met her husband. She immediately threw her arms around his neck, crying:

'Martin, where were you? Someone has come back from Brazil! Arnold's here!'

'Already? I thought not until Easter!' Martin said, taken back.

'He becomes wiser day by day and embarked ahead of time. Come in! Setti and Netti are in a state; that is, he's behaved sympathetically towards them; they didn't have to be ashamed before their brother. Just listen to how they're laughing!'

They were truly laughing, although when Father Martin entered the room the son was standing there very seriously. The son had the features of his father as a youth, but he had grown about an inch taller and, in addition, was as slender as a fir. His father's heart became joyful at the sight; a sharp ear could have heard, however, in the middle of this great joy, a weak cry like that of a strangled rabbit, for in it Martin's academic flirtation expired without further ceremony. Without Martin's becoming clearly conscious of the event his son in the flower of his youth stood before him like a living critic and immediately worked upon his good disposition.

However, both of them shook each other's hands warmly. 'I thought you'd be coming in spring,' said Salander.

‘That’s when I had intended, but in March I have to do some military service again; they don’t want to give me leave any longer. If I want to maintain my present rank it’s been ordered that because I’m still young I must serve; they can’t use any old lieutenants in the battery. Before that I have to live here a few months and get into the spirit of things.’

‘You’re right!’ Martin replied sadly. ‘I had wanted to serve my time too, and perhaps I would have become a useful administrative officer at least; that Wohlwend affair prevented me from doing so, since I had to go away like a shot out of a gun. But now I’ll have my son in the thick of things if something happens.’

‘Speaking of Wohlwend,’ Arnold Salander said, ‘I brought along a piece of news. I had not taken along the documents in vain concerning the transaction with that exploded bank in Rio. Not until three months before I sailed did I get wind, through an acquaintance of yours, that an old rascal of that business, driven by necessity, had been smoked out and after coming secretly was lying ill in the hospital. He was discovered; various individuals who once had sustained injury had the courts question him, and that weakened fellow, who no longer had anything to lose, told everything that he knew. Naturally, I also handed over your papers, furnished an appropriate abstract and report and asked for a hearing. And lo and behold, he confessed that behind the back of the beautiful board of directors he had carried on a secret fraudulent account with Schadenmüller-Wohlwend on whose behalf he had, when good opportunities were offered, chased rabbits into the kitchen. Thus he had also informed Wohlwend of your deposit and of the colossal bill of exchange which you had received for it, and he had directed him to do what he should not omit doing. However, they were never able to liquidate that fine account, having been surprised by the events; and so Wohlwend has kept for himself whatever he could get hold of, that is, whatever was not paid here in Münsterburg. The record in good Portuguese, properly attested to, I have with me. That individual then died; I don’t know what else had happened there.’

Martin listened amazed, and finally said merely: ‘So indeed!’ But instead of lingering over the old-suspected and now newly-confirmed matter, he silently thanked the kindly fate which at

the last moment had guarded him from falling into the set trap, from injuring his faithful wife and from standing in front of his son as a foolish old individual. With the last sigh he was to give in this affair he solemnly promised to make amends. At the head of his family he strode into the dining-room where his wife and daughters had prepared the table in honour of the returned son and where Magdalene, with true pride, served the finest roast—such as she had not turned and basted for a long time now.

‘I’m happy that I’m finally back,’ said Arnold Salander as his father filled his glass, ‘it’s best, after all, in one’s native land.’

‘You’re not coming at a fortunate moment,’ replied Martin, the father, ‘haven’t you heard all that’s happened during this past year—that miserable stuff?’

‘I’ve followed it closely, and even in our own newspapers,’ replied Arnold, ‘it certainly wasn’t edifying, but many a thing has crawled over our land which was still less beautiful. After the glorious Burgundian Wars the people were so unruly that each of them that stole so much as the cost of a rope was hung on the gallows. That’s already in our schoolbooks! And still we’ve existed an additional four hundred years.’

‘Yes, at times it’s showed,’ said the father, ‘but still it’s a good sentiment. Come, my wife and children, let’s drink with Arnold and rejoice in that he finds it more endurable than we had hoped.’

They touched their glasses together with a tinkle such as had not sounded for a long time; Magdalene watched from near the door, and with both index fingers wiped her eyes. Frau Marie called to her and offered her own glass to her which she boldly emptied; then she sheepishly left the room.

Arnold again began to speak.

‘I believe,’ he said, ‘that it would become much more endurable if we would be less self-satisfied and not always mistake patriotism for self-admiration! I have, although still young, seen a considerable portion of the world and I’ve learned to appreciate the proverb *C’est partout comme chez nous*. If, perhaps, we now fall into troubled waters then we just have to try to get out of them, and, in the meantime, console ourselves with the inversion of the proverb: Everything is the same here as it is everywhere else!’

That was spoken as if it came out of old Martin’s heart and

completely according to his thinking, only it seemed new to him because he himself had built so vigorously, had improved upon the public commonwealth and had taken many a thing as being more incomparable than it really was.

The re-united family sat together a long time, and they were as happy as on that evening when Martin had come to feed the hungry children and their mother.

With light spirits and truly rejuvenated he went to bed. After some time when Marie noticed that he was not sleeping but was ruminating contentedly, she said:

‘Martin! Isn’t it true that you’re pleased with Arnold, because for the first time you’ve forgotten the goodnight sigh with which you’ve depressed me for more than half a year.’

‘You’re only half correct!’ Martin answered slowly and deliberately; however, he decided to acquaint his faithful wife with his defection so that no gloomy topic would lie between them.

He then related the entire story of Myrrha Glawicz, of the imagined pains of love which possessed harmless intentions and had higher ethical motives, as well as of the speech which he had thought out for Frau Marie, up to that instant where the mere sight of his son had shattered his castle in the air.

‘Well, what do you have to say?’ the repentent and forgiveness-seeking man called over to her since his wife remained silent. Only after first turning restlessly in bed for a while did she suddenly burst out laughing and then again became silent. She then laughed once more and said:

‘I’m only laughing in joy because this last danger that had menaced us has departed so mildly. You should thank heaven, Martin, that your son came at just the right time—to the minute. It wouldn’t have been a matter of my concern but of yours and his and of the daughters. How would we have stood before them? But do you know, Martin, since you’ve become cured by the simple, unexpected presence of our son, so the foolish action which you had wanted to inflict upon me should be forgiven and forgotten. It’s a good sign, a golden one, which I will store in my soul for as long as I live! And now, sleep soundly Martin, your story has something conducive to sleep in it.’

So departed Martin Salander’s late springtime of love which was supposed to bring about a rejuvenation of his political energy—mercifully passing without further trumpet blasts.

CHAPTER 20

HE DID SEEM to have become younger when he strode towards his office the next morning, his son at his side. His feet carried him lightly, but his hips rocked back and forth slightly, almost unnoticeably, as they had done long ago when a vital energy, a good intention, had flowed through him.

Arriving at his place of business they first conversed with the employees, who greeted Arnold in a friendly manner, and they discussed this or that—what the day would bring or what had been accomplished of late. Then the father and son went into Martin's private office to discuss, more thoroughly than had been possible in letters, point by point, and in detailed conversation, the condition and future of the business. Nothing new came to the fore on this occasion save perhaps the final question whether the business undertakings should not be expanded, considering the satisfactory conditions, and whether they could not venture some chances.

It was Martin who had asked the question and who, with complete confidence, attentively watched his son.

Arnold pondered over, or rather withheld, his ready reply. In the meantime he played with the model of a new scale for weighing gold which someone had put on his father's desk.

'It depends upon you, Father,' he said finally. 'I'll gladly co-operate under your management.'

'No, it depends upon you,' Martin replied. 'You're the son and heir whose future it is.'

'The heart of the question lies in the word venture which you have used: "whether an expansion is to be ventured".' Arnold continued, 'We're standing close to the extreme point at which this can be said very correctly; that is, where one in order to accomplish more must place a portion of his profits, perhaps at last all, on a gamble. For my part, I must confess that over there, on the other side of the water, more than once in quiet moments

I have thought about it—how far we really want to grow in our business. Do we, indeed, wish to become little nabobs who either must alter their lives or anxiously have to bury this mammon which surpasses their needs, and, in both instances, makes them ridiculous in their own eyes? Besides, you're a politician and a popular man; I'm a friend of history and a jurist by profession, so it would be better for both of us if we were to remain simple in custom and habits as you have done so exemplarily up to now. Forgive me, these are my feelings! I feel also a homesickness for my books, and with the possibly rapid growth of the business I would have to spend more time with the stock market reports and in the stock exchange than I would care to.'

'You express only thoughts which I have already entertained myself. But what had brought me to this question is the future of our country. I fear that the time is not far distant when the legislature will put its hand more heavily on fortunes; then it would be good, at least I thought so, to invest more without exactly becoming impoverished.'

Arnold laughed. 'That would not be my position,' he said, 'I would much rather contest that arbitrary action as long as I'm able. If it prevails well and good, then I'll submit; but then it is all the same to me whether or not they take two million or ten from us.'

'Well, who said anything about taking?' cried the father somewhat irked; 'everything will happen above board. But believe me, the postulates of necessity will pour down so thickly that we'll be glad to have good shoes.'

'Let it pour; it will stop! Just remember, Father, at the beginning of our century when the fatherland was turned topsy-turvy and it suffered under the tyranny of the First Consul of France. In those days the clergymen reported that so many people in their parishes were tired of living and yearned for death, and now after eighty years we everyday people from the country are as free as larks in the air, even if not free of passion; we sit here in one of the houses of the vanished aristocracy and deliberate whether or not we want to become still richer. However, I'm not afraid—neither with much money nor without it.'

With shining eyes the old Salander looked at the young one and seized his hand.

'Let us,' he spoke with emotion in a softer voice, like a con-

spirator, 'let us vow, right now, never to abandon land and people. May it decide whatever it desires!'

'That I can well swear to,' the son replied, returning the hand-clasp of his father, 'considering higher powers, of course.'

'What do you mean by that?'

'In this case, for example, a complete demoralization!'

'That can certainly become the most beautiful *reservatio mentalis*!'

'Well, without any proviso it would still be *chez nous comme partout*!'

'Then it's settled,' concluded Martin and released Arnold's hand, 'and as far as business is concerned we'll let matters stand.'

After these strange discussions in which the two men showed themselves to be so entirely different and yet so similar, they began to peak of Louis Wohlwend and to deliberate what was to be done, as a beginning, with the document Arnold had dug up. They found that they could not look for a profit anymore because of the statute of limitations; on the other hand, they intended to inquire covertly whether perhaps obligations towards a third party would call for a law suit. In the meantime they decided to have a German translation made and, in case of necessity, perhaps, by means of it to be able to drive Wohlwend out of the country at any hour merely by confronting him with it. Meanwhile, all connections would be broken off with him. Arnold felt inclined to undertake the expulsion without further ado; the father, on the other hand, was for delaying since he had pity on the women whom he considered to be innocent victims. He felt a secret necessity to spare even Wohlwend himself for if the culprit were no longer able to be punished then the publication of that document must, however, finally thrust him downward into the ranks of notorious criminals. And he remained, nevertheless, the comrade of his youth and, at one time, his good friend.

They scarcely had concluded this affair and the men were at the point of each going about his own business when they heard a knock, and the unlucky Wohlwend stepped inside leading the beautiful Myrrha by the arm.

'Old friend, forgive us!' he cried, 'for surprising you so unexpectedly. I was taking a walk through the city with my sister-in-law and suddenly learned that your esteemed son had returned

home. And when we[•] had arrived at this building I said we want to run upstairs, you can come along if you like, and greet the gentlemen while we're there. We want to extend our welcome, Mr. Arnold; that's your name, isn't it?'

Father and son looked as if they had been struck by lightning. Neither one took the outstretched hand, and neither knew what to say, still less could they bring themselves to reject the man in the presence of that touchingly beautiful maiden. Finally, Martin Salander pulled himself together while he cautiously drew his old friend to one side and softly spoke to him:

'You* must excuse us, Mr. Wohlwend, for not being able to speak to you now. We are, as you can easily understand, busy with pressing matters.'

'You†?' murmured Wohlwend, thunderstruck; immediately he stepped farther to one side, 'what does this mean?'

'Oh, not very much!' Martin replied, embarrassed and yet peculiarly irritated that that evil spirit would bring that dangerous being before the eyes of his son. 'Circumstances change now and then; an appropriate clarification will be found, no doubt, as I have said: today we must request to be excused, we truly are extremely busy.'

He could not have brought a harsher word over his lips because Myrrha, towards whom he had glanced, once more awoke a fervent sympathy within him. While he spoke his abrupt words, in his dilemma he strode up and down along the wall near Wohlwend. Silently, Wohlwend persistently walked alongside, shooting evil glances at him and also watching the young people, not daring to depart since he did not know how he would arrange it.

In the meantime Myrrha was left in the room, abandoned, looking around helplessly, and at last trembling when Arnold, surprised, looked at her. Courteously, he asked her to sit down and he too took a chair.

'You're from Hungary, my dear?' he asked with instinctive sympathy, and in order to say something.

Continuing to tremble she looked around and replied with awakened confidence:

'Yes, truly from Hungary, the kingdom. But brother-in-law

* The formal 'Sie' rather than the familiar 'du.'

† Wohlwend is referring to the above.

Volvend-Glavicz he not speak true; no not 'on street but already last night know master arrive. But excuse, he just forgotten.'

'And how long has it been that you've been living here?'

'Two years believe I, or one. Beg forgiveness, I no know, certain.'

'And how do you like it in Switzerland?' he continued, somewhat taken back as he looked at her more closely. She felt that, and with tears falling whispered:

'I like it nowhere! I beautiful but not quite clever, so say Father, may soul rest in peace, and Mr. Volvend-Glavicz say I fall on head but marriage make me sound. I no understand but no believe 'till I see!'

In spite of her distress she said all that with confiding words, as youth talks to youth, as if in a confusing and most delicate affair she had hit upon the right person. Becoming more and more amazed, Arnold scrutinized the lovely creature, and only now discovered how a strange light flickered through the moist veil of her tears.

In that instant Wohlwend, who in his uneasiness still continued running next to old Salander, glanced over and saw the seemingly quick intimacy between the young people. Obviously he thought that the hook which he had cast was already set, but he might have thought it to be more expedient to break the line for this time in order to let the barb have its effect later at a more favourable moment. Suddenly he left Father Salander and in two strides he was behind Myrrha's chair, placing his hand on her shoulder.

'Well, truly we don't dare disturb the gentlemen any longer,' he cried. 'Come along sister-in-law, we want to take our leave of them.'

At the same time he took her by the arm after she had arisen, startled, and calling loud words of farewell back into the office and swinging a majestic fur cap, disappeared with the beautiful illusion just as quickly as he had come.

Father and son stood and looked at each other. Finally Arnold took a deep breath, like one who is recovering from a sudden fright.

'What a pity; what a beautiful woman,' he said.

'Why pity?' the elder, who already had begun to fear that the son might already have fallen in love with her, asked in reply.

'Why,' Arnold again began, 'because the poor wretch is feeble-minded—perhaps even insane!'

'Feeble-minded?'

'Haven't you ever spoken to her?'

'More than once! Of course, there never was an opportunity for an orderly conversation to take place.'

'In any event, the girl is simple-minded in a high degree, which no doubt means the same. Just listen to what that poor girl spoke of.'

Arnold related the contents of their little talk and depicted her conduct, the expression on her face.

The father became fiery red up to under the silvered locks over his forehead, perplexed as to what he should say about it. It was an all too bitter echo which made him shake his head repeatedly on their way home. Arnold did not perceive this inner excitement. The son had already forgotten that little event until he suddenly remembered it at the table and began to speak of it. After he had described the proceedings he stressed how well grace seems to get along with feeble-mindedness. But it was an uncanny spectacle and he did not care for it.

Frau Marie had immediately become slightly flushed when he mentioned that unexpected visit. But when she had thrown a glance towards her husband, and in his silent features observed the struggle with shame which he concealed with difficulty as he was sitting there before her, the blush withdrew like a delicate rosy veil, and in her eyes and around her lips it stirred gently like the finest comedy ever performed in the face of a woman.

Only Martin Salander, who looked at his wife distrustfully, saw and understood it; he felt a little bit better, nodded gratefully and somewhat foolishly to her while he asked her for a glass of water. But that drama on Marie's face had already changed to earnest contentment when she heard with what cold calm Arnold concluded his disclosures.

Not until now did Salander, the father, venture to remark to his son:

'But you did, as I could see rather fleetingly, put your head rather close to hers!'

'Not I,' replied Arnold, 'it was she who in her innocence slid closer to me, and that even disturbed me a little since, as I could detect from her breath, she had eaten sausage shortly before. I

could have relished it if I had had some mustard to go with it!'

'You're not an easy man to deal with!' cried one of his sisters, who up to now listened somewhat dejectedly since the topic did not please them, and the father said:

'Yes, he's a critical fellow!' the mother said not one word but her eyes, showing pleasure, rested upon her son. The real secret was and remained hidden from the children.

CHAPTER 21

THE NEW LIFE of the family now flowed along clearly and peacefully until the stream rippled somewhat because of Martin's zealous spirit.

It was not long before he no longer wanted to watch how Arnold outside the business lived only for his studies and the companionable meetings with some comrades of his youth. He urged him to turn gradually to public affairs in which, indeed, he had the best opportunity if with his father he would visit political clubs, election meetings and, now and then, one of the numerous lectures given to the explanation of a law or other resolution and the forthcoming questions of general interest. There he would soon learn to make use of his acquired information, to apply his power of reasoning and to become a co-worker. And that is necessary, for without aroused youths and young men the older generation, no matter how wise, would lack half its life.

Modestly but consistently, however, Arnold refused his father's urging. He had intended, he declared, to limit himself in the fulfilment of all civic duties, among them being, mentioned only parenthetically, the matter of never partaking in "an election if he neither knew the nominees nor those who nominated them. He wanted to await passively this so-called co-operation until someday when it had to be undertaken; until then, however, he intended to observe the actual happenings and their fruits, in them he would come to know the persons better who produced them than he would have from only their speeches, and, in turn, the parties from these persons as well as from the newspaper articles which they would write. He would not care to expose himself to the traditional influences, and for that reason he would not go to where they were being exchanged, only in this manner would he feel himself to be free and some day able to tell anyone what he considered to be true. Some young people now think like that.

The father resisted his unreasonable requests, but he felt hurt that this was to be all the influence he should have on his own son—he who had tried so hard and so selflessly to serve the country. Therefore, he again returned to the idea that in school the son may have become a doctrinaire in whom perhaps the reactionary was only slumbering. A painful suspicion began to bother his soul.

That, however, changed for the better when one day Arnold asked for permission to entertain some friends in the house, since he owed them something of that nature. They were young people, some of whom were of small means, perhaps even poor and others were sons of rich families. At the same time Arnold wished that the father would honour them with his presence, and the latter quickly agreed, thinking to have an opportunity on this occasion to come to know his son's company and his convictions more thoroughly. The mother wanted to do this for her son, but she declared that she would have to have a cook and waiters. Old Magdalene would be entirely unable to cope with the matter; she herself did not know what was customary these days and, moreover, she was no longer able to stand in the kitchen. The daughters could not be burdened.

Arnold objected to these measures; he did not want to bring lavishness and pomp into the house—that did not occur to him at all. His friends were all sensible and jolly fellows, and if old Magdalene would prepare respectable specimens of her art, which she indeed had been able to do for a long time, and would serve the dishes in her somewhat funny manner, everything would come off beautifully. A female assistant she might employ by all means.

There was a little quarrel about that until he apparently retained the upper hand—but only apparently. When he came home an hour earlier than usual on that evening a snow-white cook stood at the stove and in the dining-room a tail-coated waiter busied himself with a number of plates and glasses. It was he no doubt, who had folded the napkins in the shapes of rabbits and chickens which adorned the already laid table. Frau Marie said it was just not possible otherwise; she could not make the family subjects for gossip as being members of the *nouveau riche* by having a badly turned out affair.

The guests appeared punctually, almost all at the same time,

so Father Salander was able to appear as the last one and without having to wait too long. Instantly he felt pleasantly stimulated by the good appearance and the decently sincere behaviour of the company. At the table, especially, he wondered secretly at the unabashedly good tone, the absence of all bad speaking manners common to people who do not circulate among others, and the lack of trivial jokes and ambiguities. So as to be able to listen more carefully he did not speak much, and especially took care not to begin to speak of politics, intending that Arnold's friends and he himself would turn to it all the more freely. Also, he provided sufficiently for the renewing of drinks which loosened the tongue. The young gentlemen became all the merrier, but everything was within appropriate limits and no one needed a word of caution. The conversation grew more lively, and since the participants were equally educated, well-informed and also of a lively spirit, political topics no less than others appeared; however, not one single biased word, not one word which could have been interpreted as disrespectful towards the people was to be heard, scarcely an unconstrained robust expression perhaps about this or that vulgar sycophant who just now was haunting the presses or the councils. At the most it was said: 'What do you want? This fellow has his path laid out for him; he has to follow it and will not escape his reward.'

Even while Martin was wondering at the experienced tone which seemed so natural to this youth the topic had already disappeared from the conversation. These people, he thought, do not have the capacity to pursue an idea; they do not seem to possess a political vein! But before he was able to confirm this suspicion more definitely the conversation moved on in wider and freer orbits; no one boasted like a teacher or prophet, and as for phrases, they were to be heard still less; one saw only that these were manly youths who kept the world open and would not have it stuck into a tobacco pouch. Martin had some difficulty following the path of the newest allusions to the general state of education, for in some things he had been left behind a little too much and, more than once, had to ask for information which was imparted to him without condescension and quite without a to-do—as a matter of course or as one speaks of the weather outside; all this was pervaded by a breath of unspoiled honesty which freshened his heart.

Thank God, he thought, we haven't spent our money for nothing! These indeed are also the fruits of education.

But he did not examine them to determine if they were a result of education at home or by the state.

Soon he participated in the happy mood of the company; as of the older generation, courteously he thought of paying back his obvious pleasure by withdrawing by ten o'clock and leaving Arnold's small table company to itself. However, he did not succeed in getting away before ten-thirty, and he looked for the women who were still awake in their chamber.

'Are you, at last coming, you toper?' said the mother, 'being with those young people must have pleased you gloriously well. How was it?'

'I believe that I haven't had such a good time in all my life as I had this evening,' the man answered her. 'They're quite fine people, bright heads, *nota bene*, well-mannered fellows with whom our Arnold associates, fellows of whom it can be said that they are in good company when they're together.'

'That sounds very edifying,' replied Frau Marie happily, 'and I like to hear it. And what part among them does Arnold play?'

'No one plays a part, there aren't any pushers—I would swear to it—and yet they know what they want although they do not prattle about it. Believe me, if there is young manhood of that kind then I don't worry about our future.'

With an eloquent tongue he tried to depict to the listening women the approximate proceedings of the evening, and to describe some of the friends who had pleased him especially, until he was interrupted by a heart-resounding singing which rang from the modest room. There with energetic, fresh voices, they sang of the joy of living, quick and true to the rhythm, short and sweet, and immediately thereafter they were heard departing. They left the house without making much noise.

'Well, how pleasant that was,' cried the young women, 'and so neatly concluded, right to the point.'

'There—you're all still awake,' said Arnold, entering with a light, 'that's good, because I thought our singing had awakened you from your sleep. I didn't want to prevent them and I even crowed along with them since it wouldn't have made any difference!'

'You could very well have kept right on singing,' said the

mother, 'and yet the decisive stop has left a favourable impression behind. Do you always do it that way?'

'Yes, whenever we sing; I don't know how it has become a custom with us! The mood must get out, and as we are not virtuosos still we do not want to work like serfs. But now good-night everybody and many thanks for the patience you've shown. I want to read for an hour before I go to sleep.'

When Arnold was gone, the mother, quite astounded, asked Martin: 'Did the boy drink only water—reading for still an hour and so quiet like breathless calm air!'

'The devil he drank water!' said Salander, the father. 'He swallowed as much wine as everybody else—he is, after all, your son, you witch!'

All laughed over that funny thrust and then they went to bed.

Quietly now the little ship of Martin Salander sailed along ready for storm and peace, but always laden with good hopes. Many an item he had to throw overboard as counterfeit; however, the son knew how to restow the cargo so that the gaps were unnoticeable and so that no roll would set in and the vessel would remain seaworthy, resisting the evil cliffs which, now here, now there, appeared on the horizon.

Also, the dark little pirate ship of Louis Wohlwend that had crossed Martin's path for a generation repeatedly drew close but could no longer draw alongside. It was now fairly well established that by means of the robbery which he had committed on Martin, and with it the salvage of his ill-gotten gain, he had acquired, in that well-known way, his wife and her inheritance. Therefore, it was no longer necessary for him to grasp still more; however, once and for all he took his 'old friend' as his personal property, and the envy of inborn limitation drove him again and again to snatch at his share and to harm his friend, while at the same time that silly founding of a religion furnished him with a mask which was supposed to satisfy that cruel vanity he indulged in at all times.

Because of compassion for his boys and the probably innocent womenfolk, the Salanders still did not want to make use of that document which would destroy him instantaneously. They contented themselves in rejecting him curtly, no matter in what form he wanted to approach them, and they did not tell him why they did so.

Thus, at the end, he came into an unbearable state of uncertainty and he lost completely his unwarranted self-confidence. In order to find somewhere else the nothingness which was his lot, he yielded.

One evening Möni Wighart, the faithful one, appeared; he related how he had seen Wohlwend at the railway station boarding an express train, and how he, with women, crates, trunks, and evil glances had departed.

